

RICE UNIVERSITY

**Plato, Souls, and Motions**

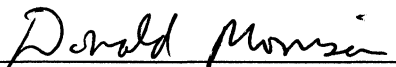
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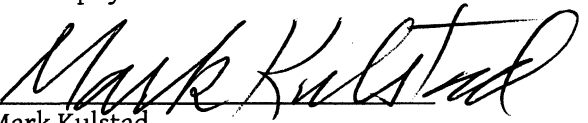
**Brian D. Prince**

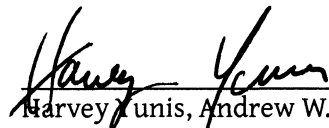
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## ABSTRACT

Plato, Souls, and Motions

by

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Plato's late works contain an unexpectedly consistent treatment of the physics and metaphysics of souls. In the course of showing this, I argue that: (1) the middle period dialogues *Phaedo* and *Republic* assume, but do not mention, a Form of Soul; (2) the *Timaeus* contains a physical theory according to which all changes of every kind are forms of spatial motion; (3) Plato's view of souls as self-movers is identifiable in more of his late dialogues than is usually recognized (namely, in the *Statesman* as well as in the *Phaedrus*, *Timaeus*, and *Laws*); (4) in the definition of souls as self-movers, "motion" should be read as "spatial motion" rather than "change" in general, and (5) neither the *Phaedrus* nor the *Timaeus* contains the claim that human souls are immortal, while both dialogues contain a concept of "soul-stuff," a material from which individual souls are manufactured.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## 0.1 Introduction

This dissertation describes and analyzes two kinds of relations in Plato's philosophy: those between individual souls and visible items, and those between individual souls and Forms. It is a commonplace that Plato's metaphysics posits two distinct worlds, a realm of abstract, unchanging, eternal Forms lying outside space and time, and the world of sensible, changing, perishable, spatiotemporally located things among which we live. Now individual souls do not exactly fit into either of these worlds. Scholars often react to this fact by saying that souls have one foot in each metaphysical realm, or somehow stand between them. Individual souls can become aware of items in both worlds, for example, so on the ancient epistemological principle that "like is known by like," souls must somehow be like both worlds. But how this is possible, since the two worlds are defined by qualities that are opposed to one another?<sup>1</sup> Further, the opposed qualities here are not first-order properties applying to individual items, such as "hot" or "cold," but second-order properties describing the ways an item possesses its first-order properties. Examples of these second-order properties include "stable" and "unstable," "eternal" and "destructible," "mutable" and "immutable." That is, while Plato gives common-sense accounts of how visible items partake of opposing pairs of qualities of the first type, the same account rules out any entity's partaking of opposing pairs from the second list. These properties are not susceptible to Plato's treatment of first-order properties, since the two worlds are defined through the opposition of the second-order pairs. This problem is one aspect of the more gen-

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<sup>1</sup>*Phaedrus* 246c-d, for example, asserts that souls move back and forth between the two worlds, and describes souls doing so, but says nothing about how this is possible in the first place.

eral problem addressed in this dissertation: reaching greater clarity and detail in understanding how individual souls relate to each of Plato's worlds.

My central finding is that Plato has two distinct theories describing these relations. The first, which I shall call the Imitation Theory, often goes unrecognized in Plato's dialogues, so the first task will be to show that it is there. The second, which I shall call the Self-Mover Theory, is announced explicitly in a few dialogues (the *Phaedrus*, *Timaeus* and *Laws*), but is sometimes thought to have little importance outside these few brief passages. Each of these theories is found in certain central Platonic texts, and each appears to be coherent.<sup>2</sup> On certain central issues the two theories at least imply distinct conceptions of souls and their relations, and at most are incompatible.

Before introducing the two theories in more detail, two points about what I will *not* do in this dissertation: First, this dissertation is part of a larger project, asking how Plato treats relations among souls and Forms, and among souls and the visible world, and also what these relations tell us about the nature of the entities involved. I mostly do not address the second stage of the project here, namely asking what the *relations* tell us about the natures of the *relata*, although occasionally I will comment on this issue. Second, my interests lie in the relations between individual souls and Forms, and between individual souls and visible items; I do not intend to discuss relations between Forms and visible items, except in passing. There is already an extensive literature on that topic, whereas the one I address has only been studied sporadically.

Several claims I shall defend are not new *qua assertions*; previously, these claims

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<sup>2</sup>I make no claim that these two theories exhaust the list; there may be yet other ways of treating these relations in other Platonic texts.



have been put forward in passing, without detailed consideration, argument, or often even evidence. In these cases, the contribution of this dissertation is to offer, for the first time, a detailed defense, including textual evidence and explicit reasoning from the texts to the claim in question.

Here, to introduce the two theories, are their most salient claims. The Imitation Theory claims that *there is a Form of Soul* along with the other Forms mentioned explicitly. However, Plato never *mentions* this Form. This theory is found in the *Phaedo* and *Republic*. The Self-Mover Theory claims that *individual souls are sources of their own spatial motions*. It is found in the *Phaedrus*, *Timaeus*, *Laws*, and *Statesman*. These theories are distinct and, in my view, incompatible. In the *Phaedo*, souls are souls in virtue of partaking of the Form of Soul; in the *Phaedrus*, however, something is a soul if and only if it is a self-mover. *Prima facie*, these are different ways of conceiving of individual souls. To describe these two theories in their own right, and then to compare them, would fill a much larger project than this dissertation. Therefore, in discussing each theory, I shall focus on certain problems, those needing to be addressed immediately to substantiate my claims that these theories are part of Plato's works.

## The Imitation Theory

I shall call the first conception of how individual souls are related to Forms and the visible world the *Imitation Theory*. The *Phaedo* and *Republic* ascribe an eponymous relation to each visible thing and the various Forms it partakes of: snow is snow because it partakes of the Form of Snow, is cold because it partakes of the Form Cold, is white because it partakes of the Form White, and so on for all visible

objects and for all their properties.<sup>3</sup> I will assume that this pattern, relating Forms and visible individual items, holds over the texts housing both theories, positing the Forms as originals and visible items as their images. The passage on the divided line, for example, sets out this hierarchical structure of reality, according to which items at each level are images or imitations of items at higher levels (*Rep.* 509d–511e). The most important claim for which I shall argue, in discussing the Imitation Theory, is that this theory assumes the existence of a Form of Soul along with the many other Forms it posits openly. The Form of Soul is never mentioned, making the path to showing its existence somewhat long. For this reason, Chapter 1 is mostly taken up with showing this Form’s existence, and having done this, has less space to investigate what follows about the nature of souls and their relations with Forms and visible items.

If there is a Form of Soul, individual souls will participate in Forms just as do visible items, and in particular they will qualify as souls by participating in the Form of Soul. Establishing that there is a Form of Soul will contribute much to our picture of individual souls, for souls differ from visible items in perhaps the most important category for Plato, namely, souls are invisible, while visible items are, of course, visible. So if there is no Form of Soul, we cannot look to the model of visible items for any help in understanding how the metaphysics of souls work. On the other hand, if there is a Form of Soul, we can infer that individual souls derive their most basic property — being souls — from participation in that Form, in parallel with the way visible items work. This fact, in turn, will help explain many other claims about souls found in the *Phaedo* and *Republic*: that souls do best when most

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<sup>3</sup>Some parts of this description of the theory of Forms are controversial, but in broad outline this is a standard account. I argue for the details of this view in Chapter 1.

removed from the visible world, for example. At least when a soul is doing as well as it can, then, it will be quite similar to the Forms. The theory thus suggests that souls become more like the kind of things they imitate. An individual soul, when in a good condition, is similar to the Forms and dissimilar to visible items, and vice versa when the condition of a soul is bad. I infer from this that there is something about individual souls in virtue of which it is good for them to resemble Forms, and bad to imitate visible items. I explore these issues more in Chapter 1.

### The Self-Mover Theory

Call the second theory the *Self-Mover Theory*, after its most salient claim, that individual souls are self-movers. It is both more nuanced than the Imitation Theory and incompatible with it. Here are two reasons for thinking the two theories incompatible. First, the Imitation Theory holds that souls in the best possible condition (such as the gods) are exempt from change, or very nearly so, but the Self-Mover Theory implies that all souls, even the best, change at all times. Second, the Imitation Theory implies that souls become more like what they imitate. So on the Imitation Theory, when souls do change, the source of the change seems to lie outside themselves, originating in the entity being imitated. The Self-Mover Theory, however, locates the source of changes in each soul within that soul itself. It does not, in my view, deny that souls can also receive changes from outside themselves, but merely adds the claim that each soul is also a source of its own changes. The Self-Mover Theory takes pains to deny, however, that there is any source of change *anywhere in the universe* that is not a soul. By contrast, as we have just seen, the Imitation Theory allows souls to change as a result of imitat-

ing objects in the visible world, with those objects serving somehow as sources of the changes in those souls. The two theories give different answers, then, to the question whether there can be changes within individual souls that have, as their ultimate origin, something that is not a soul.

The interest of the Self-Mover Theory is not exhausted by the claim that souls are self-movers, but also involves some other innovative and little-recognized views. The most important of these is found in the *Timaeus*, which contains the elements of a comprehensive theory of change, which I shall call the *Kinetic Theory*. I discuss the Kinetic Theory in Chapter 2. The main claim of the Kinetic Theory is that all change, of every type whatsoever, is nothing but spatial motion. When conjoined with the Self-Mover Theory, the Kinetic Theory is of crucial importance for its role in explaining relations among souls and the visible world. For, as I shall argue in Chapter 3, the Self-Mover Theory does not advance the relatively vague claim that souls are sources of their own *changes*, but the much more specific claim that souls are sources of their own *spatial motions*. The Kinetic Theory shows how being a source of spatial motions is sufficient for being a source of any kind of change. So when the Self-Mover Theory is combined with the Kinetic Theory, they yield a powerful and sweeping claim about the relations among souls and the visible world, the claim that there are no sources of spatial motion, and therefore no sources of any type of change whatsoever, other than souls. I shall call this combination of the Self-Mover and Kinetic Theories the Unified Theory. In scope and consequence, the Unified Theory should thus be ranked among the most important theories in Plato's works.

The Unified Theory covers *every* change one might propose, from changes in

temperature to changes in color, and even proposes an account on which changes in age or time are also nothing but spatial motions. It follows that the changes in the visible world depend for their existence on souls and the motions (or changes) they initiate. The texts do not tell us how to apply these theories to answer most of the questions they raise, but an obvious way of filling in their broad claims is to think that the Demiurge (best known from the *Timaeus*) is the soul responsible for all the changes in the inanimate parts of the visible world that would otherwise be difficult to trace to a soul or souls.

This relation introduces another contrast with the Imitation Theory: on that theory, the clearest relation was between souls and the Forms, while on the Self-Mover Theory souls are most clearly related to visible items, with their relation to the Forms much less explicit. These theories express not just different, but opposed tendencies, the first emphasizing relations between souls and Forms, the second emphasizing relations between souls and visible items, the first making the visible world a source of change, the second denying this. (I am speaking in terms of “emphases” because that is the most directly observable feature of the texts.) I take it that according to both theories, individual souls participate in Forms, but to substantiate this claim for the Self-Mover Theory is far from straightforward; in this dissertation I have the more limited aims of (a) showing that the two theories are in the texts, and (b) showing how the Kinetic and Self-Mover Theories complement one another. There are many questions I will not discuss in this investigation, perhaps most prominently, questions about how the two theories differ, and about how much they may have in common. These are, at least for myself, among the most intriguing questions raised by my arguments. Except for scattered spec-

ulations, I will confine myself to the more basic work of establishing the contents of the two theories.

## Two Interpretive Issues

Chapter 3 compares claims across four of Plato's dialogues, the *Phaedrus*, *Laws*, *Timaeus* and *Statesman*. This raises questions about how my arguments relate to two fundamental issues in Platonic scholarship, which I address here at the outset.

First, what assumptions lie behind the comparisons I will make there among the four dialogues, and what, precisely, do I hope to establish with these comparisons? The major approaches to this problem are developmentalism and unitarianism, the first explaining differences among dialogues by imagining a narrative of how Plato's thought changed over time, the second denying that the texts are committed to (importantly) incompatible claims, and explaining apparent incompatibilities by finding different *purposes* in the texts in question, rather than attributing them to different periods of Plato's life.<sup>4</sup>

The second problem is how to think about the relation between the characters in the texts and the author of those texts. On this question there are again two characteristic positions, which I shall call "internalist" and "externalist." The internalist approach prefers to explain why a claim is made by a character in one of the dialogues by referring to features internal to the same dialogue. This approach is inspired by recent work in literary criticism, and highlights concerns such as the personalities, capacities, and motivations of the interlocutors, the type of discussion the participants are engaged in, and any conventions governing that kind of

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<sup>4</sup>For a balanced discussion of this issue, see Annas (2002) with the reply by Frede (2002).

conversation. All these factors must be taken into account in thinking about why a character makes a certain claim, and thus no claim found in the text can be attributed to Plato, or directly compared to claims found in other dialogues, before appreciating how its immediate context may have moved *that* character to make *that* particular assertion. By contrast, the externalist view is more confident that at least some claims can be attributed to Plato, perhaps on the basis of their persistence through a number of texts, or because we see characters in the text arguing more carefully for these claims, or even just because the claim is made by Socrates. This last consideration gives the name “mouthpiece view” to some variants of this approach, since one of its working assumptions is that Socrates often functions as Plato’s mouthpiece in the dialogues.

I next explain how my arguments here remain independent of these two issues, and follow this with brief remarks about how I see this dissertation in the light of these debates.

#### Developmentalism vs. Unitarianism

I will argue in Chapter 3 that the four dialogues I discuss there contain, or make, the *same* claims on certain points. This result can, in principle, serve either developmentalist or unitarian accounts. A developmentalist (if also an externalist), for example, could take it as evidence that Plato was philosophically committed to these claims at a certain period of his life, or (if an internalist), as evidence that Plato wrote arguments of this type at a certain period of his life. But these are *further* claims, detachable from the less ambitious *existence* claim that these four dialogues contain the same positions; how to fit these claims into a developmen-

talist or unitarian account is not part of my argument, and neither alternative follows from it.

In the first instance, the mere fact that these claims are found in the text is significant, as is their correct interpretation. After establishing that the claims are there, and what they mean, one can then proceed to the stage of using this data to build a position on the higher-level question of what the presence of these claims contributes to the developmentalist-unitarian debate. This, of course, is an idealized picture, since arguments establishing what a passage *means* usually draw to some extent on higher-level claims as premises. Nevertheless, it remains the case that trying to establish the best reading for a certain piece of text is *logically* at a lower level, and should be, as much as possible, a temporally prior enterprise to settling on a developmental or unitarian perspective.

In sum, comparisons among dialogues anywhere in this dissertation should not be taken as support for either side of the unitarian-developmental debate.

#### Internalism vs. Externalism

In the same way, I take my arguments to remain independent of the internalist-externalist debate, although navigating this controversy is a more subtle business. To begin, the claims I argue for should be of interest to members of both camps.

First, for externalists, to find that a certain group of dialogues contains the same claims on a central topic will obviously form an important data point. It would be far too quick, of course, even for a committed externalist, to argue immediately that Plato was committed to these views just because they are found in four of his dialogues: much more consideration of the sort of data internalists



pay attention to would be required as well. But again, since the mere existence of these claims, and the best way of reading them, has not usually been seen, and if seen, has not been argued for in detail, my goal in this chapter is just to establish that the claims are in these texts, and (in Chapter 3) that they should be read as claims about spatial motion rather than generic change. Which positions these results happen to support in further debates about Plato is not immediately at issue here.<sup>5</sup>

Less obviously, internalists should also find it significant that Socrates in the *Phaedrus*, the Athenian Stranger in the *Laws*, Timaeus in the dialogue bearing his name, and the Visitor in the *Statesman* all claim (explicitly or implicitly) that souls are in motion. Suppose, for example, that an internalist is asking why Socrates makes this claim in the *Phaedrus*, and proposes factors x, y and z as an answer. It may then be illuminating to ask whether any or all of these factors are also present for the Athenian Stranger, for Timaeus, or the Visitor. Of course the absence of the same factors for the other characters would not show that the original proposal was wrong; but if some of them turned out to be common to the other characters making this claim, this would provide a further result that the internalist could endorse as useful. More to the point here, my project is uncommitted to either externalism or internalism, for what I propose to compare are *claims* or *contents*, not characters. Further, I make no arguments about whether or not we should attribute the theories found in Plato's texts to Plato himself; when I occasionally write as if I am discussing views held by Plato, this should be taken as shorthand, to the effect that the views in question are present in Plato's texts.

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<sup>5</sup>In general, I see no incompatibility between internalism and externalism, except the most extreme varieties. But this issue too lies outside the scope of this dissertation.

In sum, I shall be arguing that certain claims *exist* in certain dialogues, and that these claims have the *same* content: these existence and identity claims are significant if put to either kind of further use, or even to no further use.

### My Views

While the developmentalist-unitarian debate is important, and should be kept in sight, progress lies at the level of claims that can be defended more concretely. One's location on the unitarian-developmental continuum, by contrast, tends to rest on judgments less susceptible to exact treatment. None of the arguments in this dissertation supports grander narratives about Plato's life or thought, but only, perhaps, a miniature narrative about his thinking on one point. I take the arguments of this dissertation to fulfill a prediction made by Annas:

The intellectual development story might be argued on the basis of the content of the dialogues alone, without depending on their formal features...probably a careful study would produce a variety of changes, and also some radically different points of view, that do not fit into a single neat picture of development.<sup>6</sup>

The changes I argue for in this dissertation are not intended to hint at a larger, grander set of changes explaining Plato's writings; instead, I take them as one small piece of a very large puzzle. In my view we do not at the moment know what large-scale patterns, *if any*, we will find when more of the puzzle is assembled. Locating and describing the pieces of the puzzle may also be a more fruitful project than speculating about what the whole puzzle could eventually turn out to look like.

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<sup>6</sup>Annas (2002, p. 16)

## 0.2 Chapter Contents

Chapter 1 argues that the Form of Soul is assumed in the *Phaedo* and *Republic*, and begins to ask what this theory implies about the nature of individual souls, that is, what individual souls must be like in order for this theory to describe their relations with the two worlds, those consisting of the Forms and visible items. Chapter 2 sets the stage for the *Self-Mover Theory* by introducing the Kinetic Theory, a theory found in the *Timaeus*, carrying far-reaching consequences for our understanding of the Self-Mover Theory. Chapter 3 argues that in each of the three texts that clearly advocates the Self-Mover Theory (the *Phaedrus*, *Timaeus*, and *Laws*) the best reading of “motion” and related words takes them to mean “spatial motion,” “locomotion,” rather than the more common reading, “change in general,” or “any kind of change.” This claim gives the Self-Mover Theory a very specific content, and connects it to the Kinetic Theory, so that the conjunction of the two is itself a comprehensive theory of change. I also argue in Chapter 3 that the myth told in the *Statesman* commits its teller to certain claims from the Self-Mover Theory, specifically the thought that the soul of the Demiurge rotates *in space*, and the claim that constant spatial rotation in the same direction counts as a way of *not* changing. Chapter 4 extends my reading of *Phaedrus* 245c–246a from Chapter 3. Here I add the argument that ψυχή (“soul”) in this argument refers to the sort of “stuff” from which individual souls are made, and not (directly) to individual souls. Chapter 4 shows that the *Timaeus* and *Phaedrus* both treat souls as having a two-level structure, the lower level consisting of “soul-stuff,” some kind of material out of which individual souls are made, the upper level consisting of whatever features are added to the soul-stuff to make an *individual* soul. It further shows

that in neither of these dialogues is there a claim that individual human souls are immortal or imperishable. The common claims about souls and motions support the suggestion that the Self-Mover Theory and the Kinetic Theory complement one another, serving a common end.

The metaphysics of individual souls under the Self-Mover Theory are more complex than previously realized. The arguments that follow attempt to reveal a small part of the landscape of the metaphysics of souls in the Platonic texts; by doing so, they also indicate how much more territory remains to be explored.

## Chapter 1

### The Imitation Theory

The *Phaedo*'s two most prominent philosophical topics are the theory of Forms and the immortality of individual souls.<sup>1</sup> This would lead us to expect that the intersection of these should also be of central importance. That is, just as Plato explains that any instance of tallness is to be explained by participation in Tallness (*Phaedo* 102b–c), and that any instance of a bed is due to its participation in the Form Bed (*Republic* 596a–b), one also wants to know whether instances of souls are souls because they participate in a Form of Soul. If so, this Form would presumably contribute to explaining why souls are immortal, intelligible, divine, etc. (*Phaedo* 80b). On the other hand, if there is no Form of Soul, it is natural to ask how Plato explained what makes individual souls souls. It is hard to believe — perhaps even implausible — that he had no views on this subject. Plato's focus on Forms and souls in both the *Phaedo* and *Republic* makes these questions inescapable. But when

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<sup>1</sup>“Form” refers to the transcendent Forms of Plato's theory; “the form of x” refers to an immanent form, also sometimes called a “property-instance,” a “character,” etc. The word “soul,” uncapitalized, will refer to an individual soul throughout, except when it occurs in a translation or quotation. When I mean a Form of Soul, either immanent or transcendent, I will write “the Form of Soul,” “the immanent form of soul,” etc. Translations are taken (and occasionally modified from) those in Plato (1997). Greek text is from Plato (1989) or Plato (2003b).

we see how central they are to his interests, it also becomes clear how carefully he has steered around them in these texts.<sup>2</sup> This chapter first asks what conclusions we should draw about the existence of the Form of Soul in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*. Having argued that this Form is assumed, I demonstrate how its presence is reflected in many of the claims these texts advance about individual souls, then discuss how to think about Plato's silence on this Form, and finally ask what the Form of Soul tells us about the nature of individual souls in these dialogues.

This problem has been the object of only occasional comment, and even less sustained attention by scholars. A little more than a century ago, Archer-Hind and Burnet took opposite sides on this question in their respective commentaries on the *Phaedo*. First, Archer-Hind in 1894:

It is true that an idea of soul is a metaphysical monstrosity; but we cannot escape it here...This is one of the errors which Plato rectifies in his later dialogues; for the present we must bear with it.<sup>3</sup>

In 1911 Burnet, apparently in reply:

There is not a word about the soul being itself a form or ἰδέα, nor is such an assumption required. The soul may perfectly well be said to 'occupy' the body without being itself an idea. It is a simple military metaphor...and implies no metaphysical theory.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>See Dixsaut (1991, p. 397), Loriaux (1975, p. 132), Guérout (1926, p. 488).

<sup>3</sup>Archer-Hind (1894, p. 116)

<sup>4</sup>Burnet (1911, p. 123). Both comments are unclear about precisely what question is being addressed. The most reasonable inference, however, is that both are discussing whether there is a Form of Soul: no one should wonder whether individual souls are Forms, even if they are *very like* Forms. For first, each Form is unique (*Republic* 597b–d), while there are many souls. Second, if individual souls were Forms, they would be immortal by the most basic assumptions of the theory; no argument would be required.

Unfortunately, Archer-Hind provides only a hint of his reasoning that a Form of Soul is presupposed, and Burnet's answer explains just as little. Neither position can claim to be obviously right.

I shall side with Archer-Hind in claiming that the *Phaedo*, and later, the *Republic*, are best read as assuming a Form of Soul, which nevertheless goes unmentioned. While I would stop short of calling it a "metaphysical monstrosity," it is not hard to see the source of his worry. Forms are unchanging, but it is hard to think of something perfectly unchanging as alive. Whether the charge of monstrosity sticks depends on details of the Form theory that lie beyond the scope of this dissertation.<sup>5</sup>

## 1.1 The Problem

At *Phaedo* 78b Socrates proposes to investigate "to which class the soul belongs."

Two pages later, he has found

...that the soul is most like (ὁμοιότατον) the divine, deathless, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, always the same as itself, whereas the body is most like that which is human, mortal, multiform, unintelligible, soluble, and never consistently the same. (80a10-b5)

The thought is clearly that individual souls are like the Forms in virtue of the fact that both souls and Forms share the properties of being divine, deathless, etc.<sup>6</sup> One

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<sup>5</sup>For example, if there is a Form of Soul, and it is essentially connected to the Form of Life, it is a further question whether the Form of Soul is itself alive, or whether this only implies that individual souls (and the bodies they occupy) are alive. The former alternative seems more monstrous than the latter.

<sup>6</sup>The claim that the reference is to individual souls will be defended below. McPherran supposes the comparison is between souls and the gods, but the context of the passage is established at

might easily think that the explanation for this is that among the Forms is a Form of Soul; for if there is no Form of Soul, then souls and Forms are different kinds of thing in the most basic sense. This last statement requires some clarification, for any individual item is different “in the most basic sense” from any Form, in the metaphysics of the *Phaedo*. This is because Forms and visible items are defined by the theory as kinds that differ in strong ways: Forms are eternal and unchanging, whereas visible items are temporary and changing. But each visible individual (as I shall argue below) has some things in common with some Forms: each of its properties is an imperfect instance of a property that one of the Forms instantiates perfectly. My red sweater and the Form Red, for example, share the property of redness; each has the same property, but in different ways. But if there is no Form of Soul, individual souls do not share their property of being souls with anything. This is the sense in which I have just claimed that if there is no Form of Soul, souls and Forms are different kinds of things in the most basic sense: they differ even more than most visible objects differ from the Forms they instantiate.

It would then require some explanation how souls can be ὁμοιότατον, “most like” the Forms, when they are such different kinds of things. Again, while carrying out this investigation, Socrates has posited “two kinds of existences, the visible and the invisible” (79a6–7), and the soul is meant to fall into one or the other of these. So if souls are part of the invisible realm, and their properties are those of the Forms, there is some close connection between souls and the Forms. Since no alternative is put forward by the text, the most obvious and straightforward explanation would be that there is a Form of Soul.

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78c10–d7 where the reference is exclusively to Forms. The gods are not mentioned in the course of the argument. (McPherran 2006, p. 93)



For most ordinary objects in our world, Plato's theory says that they rely for their being on a Form or Forms. Ordinary qualities and objects are thus analogous, in Plato's theory, to marionettes that dangle on the ends of strings. What we see in our world is dependent on, and in some mysterious way controlled by, what is going on up higher, in the world of Forms. The first question I ask in this chapter is whether souls dangle in the same way from a Form of Soul, or whether the souls in our world have some other way of existing that relieves them of this dependence on Forms, or at least of depending on the Form of Soul (since they depend on many other Forms for whatever knowledge and virtues they have). The theory made explicit by Plato in the *Phaedo* and *Republic* offers two alternative answers to my question: either souls depend on a Form of Soul, or they do not (and thus they have some other way of existing that does not depend on Forms). My answer will be that, although this is never made explicit, souls work in the same way as other entities; there is a Form of Soul.<sup>7</sup>

Writing about the *Phaedrus*, Charles Griswold points out that there are dire consequences for self-knowledge if there is no Form of Soul:

If there is no Idea of the soul, then there does not exist a comprehensive and divine Episteme of the soul; not even the gods could know the soul in the highest sense of the term. Hence self-knowledge is not, *in principle*, perfectible. If there is no Idea of the soul, then there is no anamnesis of the soul qua soul, and self-knowledge cannot in prin-

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<sup>7</sup>Robinson's view is similar to the one I will argue for here, although he gives only a kind of summary: "There [sc. in the *Phaedo*] the soul had been assimilated to the Ideas, and the hiatus between the unmoving Intelligible World and that of sensible things subject to motion had meant an inadequate explanation of the soul as we experience it in the world of movement...the elementary attribute of all living things, movement, was quietly shelved, and the static, homogeneous, unchanging entity whose immortality he was left to prove was recognizable only to himself." (Robinson 1995b, p. 114)

ciple be recollective in that sense. Human souls are not intelligible as images of an original principle of Soul, and the world is populated not by images of Soul but by souls. No one has ever had the experience of gazing directly into the immutable essence of man, for such an essence does not exist if there is no Idea of the soul...The question of the existence of an Idea of the soul, then, is by no means an insignificant one.<sup>8</sup>

Recall *Phaedo* 80a10–b5, quoted at the beginning of this section. There the soul is put in the category of the invisible, and among the properties of invisible things is being intelligible. How can individual souls be intelligible, given these claims, unless those souls have an essence? And in the *Phaedo*, having an essence means having a Form. More precisely, if souls are intelligible without an essence in the *Phaedo*, this will require some metaphysical explanation of how this is possible. But there is no hint of any such alternative explanation that would apply to souls in the text. Absent this additional theory, the inference consistent with the text is that the soul is intended to fit the same pattern as other objects that have corresponding Forms.

It is sometimes asserted or argued, however, that the theory of Forms in the *Phaedo* recognizes Forms only for certain restricted classes. After giving the positive evidence for a rich domain of Forms I will show why the various attempts to limit that range are mistaken.<sup>9</sup> I then argue that the final argument for the soul's

<sup>8</sup>(Griswold 1986, p. 89) See also p. 260 n. 21 for a summary of earlier scholarship on the question of a Form of the soul in the *Phaedrus*, all of which denies it (and, incidentally, with which I concur).

<sup>9</sup>By “rich domain” I mean — roughly — a Form for every predicate or for every natural kind, with the caveat that if the details were completely filled in, some Forms suggested by this brief description might not appear in the list of all Forms. For example, some linguistic expressions describe artificial categories (e.g., “red ball to the left of a yellow cat”), and it is plausible that Plato would not want to include these. Again, some natural kinds might not need Forms, for Plato might want to account for them by appealing to combinations of other Forms (snow, for example, might be analyzed as water and cold, so there might be no need for a Form of Snow in a fully developed theory). On the other hand, in arguing for a “rich domain” of Forms I mean that there are Forms

immortality in the *Phaedo* (102a–107a) presupposes a Form of Soul, and that the argument for the soul's immortality in *Republic* X (608d–611a) also uses this Form. I then note a group of claims in the *Phaedo* and *Republic* that may be attributed to the influence of the Form of Soul. These are the claims that change is bad for souls, and stability good. The culmination of this view is found in the picture of the gods as perfect, changeless souls. I then address the question of why Plato is silent about the Form of Soul. Finally I outline what kind of thing an individual soul is, in the theory of the *Phaedo* and *Republic*.

## How and When to Fill In

Some writers claim that treating the *Phaedo* and *Republic* as containing a single theory of Forms is a non-starter, because the various claims about Forms do not all fit together neatly. For readers who already accept that these texts contain a single theory of Forms, the argument of this section will be superfluous. Here I shall argue that even if the conjunction of claims about Forms in these two dialogues produces a rather messy theory, we should still treat this as a *single* theory.

How specific a commitment to any claim or theory must we find in the text before we ascribe that claim or theory to the text? Plato's writing is often suggestive, vague, and gestures toward positions and arguments that it does not pursue in detail, and not every target of such a gesture, of course, is legitimately imputed to a dialogue. I assume that if a passage can be read in more than one way, the best way is that which coheres with the other claims made explicitly in the text.

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for a class approximately equivalent to all the natural kinds or all the predicates, i.e. lots and lots of Forms, and without restrictions such as those I shall argue against below.

Second, when the text makes some rather general claim (as it often does), and there are several ways of filling in the details, we may not be able to decide on one as correct; several possibilities may remain. This is part of the difficulty of interpreting Plato. But it also happens that some ways of filling in the details generate problems of various kinds. These have to be weighed carefully, but I assume that the bare fact that such problems arise (on some ways of filling in the details) does not by itself show that we should not attribute the view in question to Plato, or to one of his characters. In these difficult cases, we have to make a judgment about the text while weighing all factors. So the difficulties produced by a certain reading are relevant, but not immediately decisive.

Suppose I am a planner designing a city, and I issue a general instruction to put the entrances to buildings facing east. I give some illustrations of why this will be best, referring to supermarkets, gas stations and schools as I do so. I then die, and those who succeed me must try to decide whether I meant for *all* buildings to have east-facing entrances, or only those of the types I referred to. If nothing in the instructions gives a reason for restricting the range of my instruction, then the best inference is that I intended the instruction universally. Even if it turns out that for a few individual buildings, some fact about the landscape or their purpose makes it impossible to put the entrance on the east, this does not show that the instruction was not intended to be general. In the same way, the fact that problems arise with certain Forms does not show that Plato did not intend the theory of Forms in the *Phaedo* and *Republic* to be general, i.e. to include Forms for a wide range of terms and types.

Here is an application of this issue. Gallop says about the theory of Forms:

“Immense difficulty is incurred if these [different] roles are conflated by treating all Forms alike as postulates of a single, comprehensive ‘theory,’” referring to the roles of Forms as paradigms and as universals. “The paradoxes incurred by attributing the character F to the Form F were recognized by Plato and explored in the later *Parmenides*...They can easily be generated if the paradigmatic and universal roles of the Forms are confused.”<sup>10</sup> This is the kind of problem described in the previous paragraph: if the details of Plato’s theory are completed in certain ways, paradoxes result. Do these paradoxes rule out these ways of filling in the details? I agree with Gallop that it would be unlike Plato to accept paradoxes as part of his theory, provided that Plato would analyze the paradoxes as real ones, and not instead as problems requiring further work.<sup>11</sup> But against this consideration, there is the fact that the texts of the *Phaedo* and *Republic* show no recognition of the paradoxes, and the treatment of the paradoxes in the *Parmenides* may be taken to show that Plato thought of the difficulties as problems to be worked on, rather than as insurmountable obstacles. The unity of the *Phaedo* as a dialogue gives us an initial reason to attribute unity to philosophical theories expounded within it, nor do the characters show any awareness that there are different theories of Forms within the *Phaedo*. For these reasons I find it unacceptable to think there is more than one theory of Forms within either dialogue.

In later chapters, however, I will often argue that a certain passage, which can be read in two ways, must be taken in the way I favor because the alternative

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<sup>10</sup>(Gallop 1975, pp. 97, 128) It is also sometimes argued that there is not enough in the *Phaedo* to qualify as a theory at all, e.g. by González (2002), Hyland (2002), Annas (1981, p. 217). I (obviously) assume this is not so, but will not address the issue further here.

<sup>11</sup>Socrates makes much of his reluctance to accept a theory leading to paradoxes (at least in his view) at *Phaedo* 96d–100e.

produces some logical difficulty. This is consistent with the method I have just outlined. The difference is that in the *Phaedo* we have a rich supply of evidence pointing to a rich domain of Forms, and my argument is that we should follow this evidence, letting it trump the difficulties produced by some of the Forms it generates. On the other hand, in the cases that will arise later, there is no antecedent evidence favoring one side over the other, so that difficulties on one side are the most decisive reasons we have for preferring the other.

## 1.2 The Rich Domain of Forms in the *Phaedo*

The theory of Forms in the *Phaedo* includes a Form of Soul, although this commitment usually goes unrecognized. In this section I consider the evidence that Socrates intends to posit a wide range of Forms in the *Phaedo*; in the following section I respond to specific arguments against a rich domain of Forms. Now many writers on the *Phaedo* do accept that there are meant to be Forms for some quite broad class, such as the natural kinds or predicates. But these comments are sometimes made hesitantly, and often do not point to the evidence in favor of this. In fact the evidence is broader than the hesitation would suggest, so it is appropriate to review it here. Given more explicit statements (e.g. *Republic* 596a) in other dialogues, perhaps scholars do not think it worth the trouble to adduce less definite passages. But I want to argue that the *Phaedo* itself posits a Form for every general term or natural kind, so the following passages are worth discussing.<sup>12</sup> Some of these texts make no sustained arguments, but this is no reason that they cannot

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<sup>12</sup>I will not try to decide between the domains of general terms and natural kinds.

indicate the kinds of Forms Socrates has in mind during the conversation in the *Phaedo*.

### *Phaedo* 65d–e

Forms come into view early in the dialogue. Socrates gets Simmias to agree that there is such a thing as the Just itself, the Beautiful itself, and the Good itself, then continues, “I am speaking of all things such as Bigness, Health, Strength, and, in a word, *about the reality of all other things* (τῶν ἄλλων...ἀπάντων), *that which each of them essentially is* (τῆς οὐσίας ὃ τυγχάνει ἕκαστον ὄν)” (65d13–e1).<sup>13</sup> If there is no Form of Soul, there is nothing that a soul essentially is, and the final argument for the soul’s immortality is doomed from the start, since it tries to prove that individual souls are essentially related to the Form of Life. For something that lacks an essence cannot be essentially related to anything.<sup>14</sup>

### *Phaedo* 76d–e

In the course of the argument from recollection, Socrates brings up the Forms, then says, “we refer all the things we perceive to that reality...” (ἐπὶ ταύτην (sc. οὐσίαν) τὰ ἐκ τῶν αἰσθήσεων πάντα ἀναφέρομεν, 76d9). Here all visible things are put in one group, to be contrasted with the other kind, the Forms. This too implies that there is a Form corresponding to every kind of perceptible thing.

Again, consider this exchange from later in the same argument:

<sup>13</sup>Rowe (1993, pp. 140–141) doubts that the theory of Forms is yet in view, while Ebert (2004, p. 137) agrees that the theory is being discussed. I assume that since the participants later affirm their familiarity with the theory, it is also in play here.

<sup>14</sup>Note that this argument is effective whichever of the two interpretations of the nature of the “Form-bringers” is adopted (see page 46 below).

What of the many beautiful particulars, be they men, horses, clothes, or other such things, or the many equal particulars, and all those which bear the same name as those others? Do they remain the same or, in total contrast to those other realities, one might say, never in any way remain the same as themselves or in relation to each other? — The latter is the case; they are never in the same state. (78d10–e6)

One might easily read this passage as indirect confirmation of the hypothesis of a limited range of Forms. For Socrates comes close here to speaking of Forms of men, horses, and clothing, but careful reading shows that he is not speaking of such Forms at all. Instead, he is only picking out those particulars *insofar as they are beautiful*, and his reference is to the Form of Beauty. So this looks like a passage in which Plato has carefully steered around any reference to a rich domain of Forms. This might be thought evidence for the thesis (to be considered in a moment) that there are only Forms for some limited range.

But this conclusion is not as strong as might first appear. If we reflect on Cebes' answer, it is clear that he is thinking of the whole class of visible entities. He does not need to consider anything about *beautiful* visible things in particular to give this answer; it is all *visible* things that change constantly, and it follows immediately that this is also true of beautiful visible things. So the import of the question is to contrast the visible and the invisible realms. Given this purpose, it is less certain that no Forms for substantives are involved. Cebes' statement suggests that Forms have something to do with the explanation of any property of any visible entity. The passage thus leaves it open that there may be Forms for any property and for any substance, while the limitation to a narrow range of Forms has no explicit support here.



### *Phaedo* 100c

Later in the dialogue, Socrates explains his approach to generation and destruction by saying, “if there is anything beautiful besides the Beautiful itself, it is beautiful for no other reason than that it shares in that Beautiful, *and I say that all things are in fact this way* (καὶ πάντα δὴ οὕτως λέγω)” (100c4–6).<sup>15</sup> The correct reading of this statement depends on the meaning of πάντα, “all.”

The word πάντα at 100c6 might echo the same word at 100b7; if so, it would continue to mean “all the Forms,” as it did there. On this reading, Socrates would only be endorsing his schema for instances where there is a Form available. So this reading does not imply a rich domain of Forms. Alternatively, πάντα could mean “every particular thing [that shares in a Form].” On this reading Socrates would be endorsing a rich domain of Forms, since he would be assuming a Form for any particular someone might name.

There are good reasons to prefer the latter reading. First, the earlier use of πάντα to designate “all the other Forms” occurred at an earlier step in Socrates’ development of his position. At 100c3 he asks Cebes to examine “τὰ ἐξῆς ἐκείνοις” (“what follows these things”), showing that the schema he proposes at c4–6 is a distinct claim from his earlier assertion of the existence of the Forms at b5–7. So we should not necessarily expect the two instances of πάντα to designate the same things. Second, the meaning of πάντα at c6 is controlled by οὕτως. Since

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<sup>15</sup> Another common translation of the crucial phrase is: “...and I say so with respect to everything”; the difference in translation makes no difference to the interpretations discussed here. Burnet takes this sentence to indicate a general argument that would generate Forms for any general term, while Gallop takes the statement to express the same theory as *Republic* 596a, thus yielding Forms for every general term: Burnet (1911, p. 110 ad 100c5), Gallop (1975, p. 182). So also Rickless (2007, p. 33): “...and the phrase ‘I say so with everything’ indicates that Socrates takes the thesis to be fully general.”

Socrates says “καὶ πάντα δὴ οὕτως λέγω,” whatever he means by “everything,” it must be something he can speak about “in this way.” The way in question is the schema has just proposed: “if there is anything beautiful besides the Beautiful itself, it is beautiful for no other reason than that it shares in that Beautiful.” This schema, in turn, was introduced in order to find the cause of generation and destruction: the problem was first raised at 95e10, and Socrates has just repeated his promise to show Cebes τὴν αἰτίαν (“the reason or cause”) at 100b8. Now generation and destruction happen only to sensible things and to souls. So it would not make sense here for Socrates to use πάντα to refer to “all the Forms,” since they do not undergo generation or destruction. Rather, he must be referring to particular sensibles, since these undergo generation and destruction, and this is what he has promised to show the cause of. The correct reading of 100c6, then, is “and I say that all [sensible things] are this way.” Note also that πάντα gets extra weight from the following particle δὴ, confirming that the application of this formula is general.<sup>16</sup> And since the formula applies generally to all sensibles, Socrates must be supposing that there is a Form answering to any sensible thing or quality that might come up in discussion. There must be a rich domain of Forms.<sup>17</sup>

### Weak Nonidentity

Vlastos identified a principle he called “weak nonidentity,” whose structure helps to make clear the need for a rich domain of Forms. The principle says that “sen-

<sup>16</sup>Denniston (1954, s.v. I.iii) Nehamas asserts without argument that πάντα (“everything”) must be restricted to incomplete predicates: Nehamas (1973, p. 472).

<sup>17</sup>Terms of all kinds come up for discussion in Plato’s dialogues, although the most difficult to define naturally get the most attention. For examples see Irwin (1977, p. 134).

sibles are not F in virtue of themselves; they are F by being suitably related to a form of F.”<sup>18</sup> Socrates in the *Phaedo* and *Republic* thinks souls are virtuous by being suitably related to various Forms — perhaps to Forms in general (*Phaedo* 81a), or perhaps to a Form for each virtue, and to the Form of the Good most of all (*Republic* 505a, 526d–e, 534c). These passages suggest that weak nonidentity applies not only to sensibles, but to any individual item in Plato’s metaphysics. If souls are invisible individuals, weak nonidentity applies to them too.<sup>19</sup>

Here is how weak nonidentity appears in the passages we have already examined.<sup>20</sup> The passage at 65d–67d argues that the Forms are separate from the body, that is, from anything physical. Then Socrates’ “safe” explanation claims “if there is anything beautiful besides the Beautiful itself, it is beautiful for no other reason than that it shares in that Beautiful...” (100c4–6). Since the Beautiful itself is completely separated from the physical, and therefore from sensible individuals, it follows that no sensible individual is ever beautiful in virtue of itself or any other sensible individual. This is weak nonidentity. The “safe” answer has the form “if x is f, it is f for no other reason than that it shares in F-ness” (100c). The safe answer thus has two slots to fill: “x” stands for an individual, and “F-ness” stands for a transcendent Form.<sup>21</sup> The use of this principle in the *Phaedo* implies that souls are not souls in virtue of themselves, but in virtue of the Form of Soul. In order to defeat this inference, we would need to find some reason in the text that specifi-

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<sup>18</sup>See Vlastos (1954, p. 326). The quoted version comes from Fine (1993, p. 207, punctuation modified).

<sup>19</sup>I defend the view that the soul is an invisible individual in the final section of this chapter, page 80.

<sup>20</sup>Rickless (2007, p. 39) also locates it at 74b7–c6.

<sup>21</sup>The formula refers to “an individual” rather than “a sensible individual,” since there may be invisible individuals as well.

cally rules it out, or gives an alternative explanation for souls. But there is no such evidence in the text.

### *Phaedo* 101c

A little later Socrates says, “you would loudly exclaim that you do not know how else *each thing can come to be* (ἕκαστον γιγνόμενον) except by sharing in the particular reality in which it shares (sc. a Form)” (101c2–4).<sup>22</sup> The specification of *each thing* that comes to be as the target of this theory implies that it covers all cases of becoming; this, again, was the *general* problem (raised at 95e10) to which Socrates is responding. So for every case of becoming there is some Form in which the thing comes to share. Socrates provides no limitation on the range of things to which he refers here; it is clear that he has some indefinitely wide range in mind.

The emphatic affirmation Socrates imagines for Cebes, along with the reference to the “safety” (cf. ἀσφαλοῦς, 101d2) of the hypothesis a few lines later, adds force to this implication, as does the declaration of Echechrates (102a4–6) that what Socrates had just said was “wonderfully clear to anyone of even small intelligence.”<sup>23</sup> Echechrates takes the import of the theory to be easy to grasp, and this presumably means that he takes it to be perfectly general. Had it relied on understanding some limitation or definition of a special class not enunciated in the text, it could not seem accessible to someone “of even small intelligence.”

<sup>22</sup>For the translation “coming to be” rather than “being” (another meaning of γιγνόμενον), see Dixsaut (1991, p. 380 n. 287).

<sup>23</sup>The same point is made by Bostock (1986, pp. 196–197). I read Echechrates’ statement as without irony; I see no hints of irony in any of his (few) statements in the dialogue. Whenever he speaks, he shows himself earnest, eager to learn as much as he can about Socrates, and serious in purpose.

## *Phaedo* 102b

A page later *Phaedo* sums up the argument so far, saying “it was agreed that each of the Forms existed (εἶναί τι ἕκαστον τῶν εἰδῶν), and that the other things (τᾶλλα) acquired their name by having a share in them...” (102b1–3).<sup>24</sup> The most natural reading of “the other things” is as contrasted with the Forms.<sup>25</sup> The statement thus says that the Forms exist, and non-Forms — that is, particulars — acquire their names by having a share in the Forms, implying that there is a Form for every general term or for every natural kind. Since individual souls are particulars, the natural understanding of this statement is that souls acquire their names by having a share in the Forms, including the name “soul.”<sup>26</sup>

Given the persistence of these claims throughout the dialogue, it would be surprising if some significant entity with a name failed to have a corresponding transcendental Form. Souls are, for Plato, one of the *most* significant entities, so the theory must include a Form of Soul.

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<sup>24</sup>On εἶναί τι Rowe comments that it “is a typically Socratic way of introducing important items in argumentative passages: cf. 103c11, or *Gorg.* 464a (to Gorgias: ‘I suppose you call body a something, and ψυχή?’).” (Rowe 1993, ad 64c2) See also Gallop (1975, p. 119). Hackforth’s view of this line is unclear: he first says that “the extent of the world of Forms is either as yet unconsidered by Plato, or not deemed necessary to specify in the present context,” but a page later writes, “all predication, for Plato, involves the assertion of a Form...” (Hackforth 1955, pp. 142–144)

<sup>25</sup>Burnet (1911, p. 101): “τᾶλλα: i.e. particular things.”

<sup>26</sup>(Rickless 2007, p. 29) Burnet (see last note) makes no comment on this implication for the domain of Forms. Gallop echoes both Burnet’s reading of τᾶλλα and his lack of comment on the question of domain. Loriaux concludes that the theory applies to any name: Burnet (1911, p. 101), Gallop (1975, p. 192), Loriaux (1975, p. 111).

### 1.3 Arguments Against a Rich Domain of Forms

I begin with arguments that are easily refuted, and then move to those that require lengthier treatment.

Most of the unambiguous examples of Forms in both the *Phaedo* and *Republic* have opposites, so some writers attempt to draw a line here, claiming that the theory only posits Forms for opposite qualities.<sup>27</sup> But both dialogues also contain examples of Forms that have no opposite, so this line cannot hold.<sup>28</sup> Some writers accept that there are Forms posited in these dialogues for every general term, or for every natural kind.<sup>29</sup> Others expressly deny this.<sup>30</sup> I will discuss arguments that are either recent or remain influential.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Bostock (1986, p. 176) recognizes the argument without concluding that the range of Forms is limited in this way. Others who discuss the view favorably are Dorter (1982, p. 125), Annas (1981, p. 223), White (1978, p. 149) (without finally endorsing the view). Adam notes that the examples of Forms in the *Republic* are usually attributes, but thinks the reason for this is that Plato preferred “to cite relevant examples.” This principle could be applied to the *Phaedo* as well: the examples there respond to Socrates’ interest in physical and moral explanations rather than indicating a limit on the range of Forms. (Adam 1921, p. 336)

<sup>28</sup>Namely, Forms of Fire, Snow, and Three in the *Phaedo*, Couch and Table in the *Republic*: Harte (2008, p. 199).

<sup>29</sup>Such as Rickless (2007, pp. 15–16, 29, 33), Finck (2007, p. 7).

<sup>30</sup>Among these are Crivelli (2008, pp. 218–220), Moravcsik (2000, p. 56), Fine (1987, p. 376 n. 42), Bostock (1986, p. 176) (who hesitates), Annas (1981, p. 221), and Hackforth (1955, p. 142). See also below.

<sup>31</sup>Here are my reasons for not discussing the other authors who deny a rich domain of Forms. I will comment below on Moravcsik’s position. Gail Fine seems to have changed her mind on this point, acknowledging that “we have not uncovered any argument that precludes the existence of forms for every property, and we have seen that he sometimes seems committed to the existence of forms for every property” at Fine (1993, p. 358 n. 3). Bostock acknowledges arguments on both sides of the question. Annas’ position is part of her commentary on the *Republic*, so does not directly address the state of play in the *Phaedo*. Hackforth’s comments seem inconsistent; he supposes that Plato has not thought about the range of Forms he wants to endorse, but elsewhere he understands the theory as about predication, which implies a form for most, or even every, predicate.

## Two Senses of “Becoming”

Recall one of the passages discussed above (page 30), in which Socrates declares, “you would loudly exclaim that you do not know how else *each thing can come to be* (ἕκαστον γιγνόμενον) except by sharing in the particular reality in which it shares (sc. a Form)” (101c2–4). Attempting to avoid the implication of a rich domain of Forms, some scholars have distinguished two senses of “becoming” in this passage: it may refer to a thing’s coming to have a property, or to the coming-into-being (and passing-out-of-being, or perishing) of a substance.<sup>32</sup> It is possible that Plato did not recognize the distinction, but let us grant here that he did for the sake of argument.<sup>33</sup> Socrates’ examples in the *Phaedo* are mostly, if not all, of the first type, that is, they are about coming to have a property.<sup>34</sup> This makes it easier to think that no Forms for substances are involved in the *Phaedo*. However, Socrates has introduced the Forms to explain how he has investigated “the cause of generation and destruction” (περὶ γενέσεως καὶ φθορᾶς τὴν αἰτίαν, 95e10). He then describes his youthful interest in knowing “the causes of everything, why it comes to be (γίγνεται), why it perishes (ἀπόλλυται), and why it exists (ἔστι)” (96a8–9). As Hackforth reluctantly acknowledges, the discussion of the theory of Forms at *de Gen. et Corr.* 335b7 ff., attributed to “Socrates in the *Phaedo*,” shows that Aristotle took the theory to be about generation and destruction of substances as well as acquisition and loss of properties. According to Aristotle, coming-to-be is ex-

<sup>32</sup>(Loriaux 1975, p. 98) He comments only on the fact that both senses of becoming are involved, without discussing the import of this for the scope of the theory of Forms.

<sup>33</sup>Ancient Greek does not mark this distinction; we would thus need a passage where Plato clearly makes it, and this we do not find.

<sup>34</sup>The uncertainty is due to the fact that at many points in the argument it is not clear what kind of entity is being referred to.

plained by sharing in a Form, destruction by losing the Form. Hackforth is forced to this conclusion by the fact that, while γίγνεται can have the sense of γίγνεται τι, coming to be *something*, i.e. acquiring a property, φθείρεσθαι (the word used by Aristotle) cannot mean “to lose a property.” Hackforth concludes that Aristotle is reporting the doctrine of the *Phaedo* correctly, and that he understands the theory of Forms there as applying to both types of becoming.<sup>35</sup>

### Crivelli’s Argument

Recently Paolo Crivelli has focused on *Phaedo* 102b1–3, and argued that it does not imply a wide range of Forms.<sup>36</sup> His argument assumes, however, that Plato has a single theory of Forms across all his dialogues. The evidence he finds against a rich domain of Forms comes from the *Parmenides* and *Statesman*. Apart from this evidence, he gives no reason not to think that in the *Phaedo* (one the sources of the argument *pro* that Crivelli identifies) the theory of Forms has a rich domain.

More importantly, Crivelli argues that the following passage does not imply a rich domain of Forms. Two translations of the key phrase will show where the issue lies. *Phaedo* is speaking:

It was agreed that each of the Forms existed, and that other things acquired their name by having a share in them... (Grube/Cooper)

It was agreed that each of the Forms exists and the other things that partake of these derive their names from these themselves. (Crivelli)

ὡμολογεῖτο εἶναί τι ἕκαστον τῶν εἰδῶν καὶ τούτων τᾶλλα μεταλαμβάνοντα αὐτῶν τούτων τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν ἴσχειν...

<sup>35</sup>Hackforth (1955, pp. 144–145 and p. 145 n. 1); *de Gen. et Corr.* also cited by Burnet (1911, p. 112 ad 101c2).

<sup>36</sup>(Crivelli 2008, pp. 218–219)



The difference arises from the participle *metalambanonta*, “having a share in.”<sup>37</sup> Grube takes the participle instrumentally, while Crivelli understands it as representing a relative clause limiting the class of things doing the partaking. Both readings are grammatically possible.<sup>38</sup> Crivelli’s version does not imply a wide range of Forms, since Socrates is saying that only things that partake of Forms get their names from those Forms. Grube’s version, on the other hand, implies a wide range of Forms, since his version says that everything (that is not a Form) gets its names from the Forms it partakes of. But context gives us a clear reason for preferring Grube’s rendering. For the remainder of the paragraph shows that the characters think they have just established a principle on which, whenever any particular receives a name, this must be because it participates in the Form of the same name. Socrates continues:

If you say these things are so, when you then say that Simmias is taller than Socrates but shorter than Phaedo, do you not mean that there is in Simmias both tallness and shortness? — I do. (102b3–6)

Socrates’ inference here is only valid on Grube’s causal translation. On Crivelli’s understanding, Socrates ought to show first that there are Forms of Tallness and Shortness in existence, participation in which explains the names “tall” and “short.” None of the characters thinks this step is necessary, since they take the previous

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<sup>37</sup> Authors who share Crivelli’s understanding are Zehnpfennig (1991) and Gallop (1975, p. 192) (although it is not clear that he has the difference between the two readings in mind). Those following the approach I favor are Ebert (2004) and Loriaux (1975, p. 111).

<sup>38</sup> “The circumstantial participle...may imply various other relations, such as time, manner, means, cause, purpose, concession, condition, etc. But it is often impossible to assign a participle exclusively to any one of these relations (which are purely logical), nor can all the delicate relations of the participle be set forth in systematic form.” (Smyth 1920, §2060)

agreement (102b1–2) to have taken care of this.<sup>39</sup> Being called by a name implies without further argument that Simmias participates in the Form of that name, and Crivelli's reading cannot account for this.

## Nehamas' Argument

One argument against a rich domain of Forms has gained particular prominence, and seems to retain some influence.<sup>40</sup> This is Alexander Nehamas' argument that the theory in the *Phaedo* is restricted to a special class of adjectives, those that are "incomplete."<sup>41</sup> By "incomplete" he means adjectives that are "either attributive or relational." Attributive adjectives are those that make implicit reference to what is normal for some group. A baby elephant, for example, is small *for an elephant*, but large compared with many other groups. Relational adjectives are those that require that we fill in more than one place to get a complete expression. "Fred is between" is incomplete, since we must specify between *what* and

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<sup>39</sup>Smyth again: "The force of these circumstantial participles does not lie in the participle itself, but is *derived from the context*...some participles may be referred to more than one of the above classes." (Smyth 1920, §2069, emphasis added) Crivelli's argument depends on claiming that his reading of the participle is the *only* correct one; if ambiguity is admitted in the way this participle functions, it supports my reading.

<sup>40</sup>The argument to restrict the range of Forms based on the compresence of opposites is also found in McCabe (1994, p. 60) and Irwin (1977, p. 156). Irwin's version of the argument is rejected by Silverman (2002, Appendix). I respond to Nehamas here because he gives the most developed form of the argument. The continuing influence of Nehamas' formulation is seen in Griswold (1981, pp. 138–139) and White (1979, pp. 31–32), who both accept it without criticism. Perhaps most tellingly, though, in the Hackett student edition containing five of Plato's dialogues, Cooper includes Nehamas' article as one of just eight items in the bibliography for the *Phaedo*: (2002, p. 156). Recent authors discussing or referring to Nehamas' position (not all endorsing it) are Harte (2008, p. 203 n. 32), Finck (2007, p. 28 n. 57), Devereux (2003, p. 97), Levin (2001, p. 96 n. 43) and Gill and McCabe (1996, p. 23 n. 30).

<sup>41</sup>Nehamas (1973, p. 470), Nehamas (1975, pp. 108–109).

what before we have a complete assertion.<sup>42</sup> Nehamas claims that the arguments employed in the *Phaedo* support no Forms but those for incomplete adjectives.

The argument begins by noting that the argument from recollection (72e–77a) claims that some properties go with their opposites whenever we observe them. Two sticks or stones that seem equal, for example, never seem perfectly equal; in some way they always also appear unequal. “Beautiful” and “good” are similar. Since each of these properties seems to be instantiated along with its opposite in observable objects, Socrates concludes that nothing justifies our ascribing one of these adjectives to any given object rather than its opposite. Helen is beautiful compared with other women, but ugly compared with a goddess. How then can it be true that Helen is beautiful, when the opposite assertion has just as much warrant? Nehamas argues that the theory of Forms in the *Phaedo* is meant to solve this problem. Since the problem only arises for incomplete terms, there is no evidence that the theory was ever intended to handle a wider class.

Further, Nehamas thinks he has found a logical reason that the argument cannot be extended to other terms, especially substantives. Since the argument depends on the fact that certain adjectives are always instantiated with their opposites, there must be something stable for them to be instantiated *in*. For example, if the theory applied to Helen’s status as a person just as it does to her beauty, then she would no more be a person than not a person. If this were the case, there could

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<sup>42</sup>Another example that helps explicate the concept of incompleteness at issue is “George is the father.” This is *grammatically* complete, but *logically* incomplete, since its meaning cannot be determined without a further specification saying *whose* father George is. Notice that this is not the sentence, “George is *a* father,” which leaves the identity of George’s offspring deliberately unspecified; by contrast, “George is *the* father” purports to say that George is the father of someone definite, either someone already known from context or yet to be specified. Nehamas’ argument, as I understand it, employs the logical, not the grammatical sense of incompleteness.

not be any compresence of opposites for her beauty or size, and Socrates is certainly committed to the compresence of opposite for *these* properties. One could not say, for example, that Helen is beautiful, but also ugly, for we could say instead that Helen (the person) is beautiful, while the Helen who is ugly is not a person. “Accordingly, when Socrates generalizes to ‘the beautiful, the good, and all such being’ at 74d8–9...we have no license to infer that any Forms have been generated other than those corresponding to those properties which are instantiated along with their opposites.”<sup>43</sup>

It is true that the *argument* based on compresence of opposites can only generate Forms for opposites that are co-instantiated.<sup>44</sup> But Nehamas goes further: “[Plato] gives no argument which commits him to [the] existence [of the Form of Bed], and he does give arguments [sc. from the compresence of opposites] which preclude it.”<sup>45</sup> This reaches too far: nothing Socrates says or assumes *precludes* Forms for substantives, and in particular, the logical problem Nehamas identifies does not rule out Forms for substantives.

Suppose, for the sake of argument, that there is a Form of Person. Nehamas claims this will prevent Helen from being both beautiful and ugly. But Socrates never argues that visible items like Helen suffer from the compresence of opposites when it comes to their substantive properties; that is, Socrates never claims that Helen is both a person and not a person. So it is open to Socrates to say that Helen is a person by participating in the Form of Person, but that she is also both

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<sup>43</sup>Nehamas (1973, p. 469)

<sup>44</sup>A different criticism than the one I will develop: McCabe objects to Nehamas’ argument on the general ground that it supposes that Plato’s primary concern was linguistic rather than metaphysical. (1994, p. 35 n. 24)

<sup>45</sup>Nehamas (1973, p. 463)

beautiful and ugly because she participates in the Forms of both Beauty and Ugliness. His arguments for the compresence of opposites need not apply to substantives.

Throughout the argument from recollection, Socrates works with the example of the Equal; only at the argument's end (75c-d) does he generalize to "all such things," saying:

Therefore, if we had this knowledge, we knew before birth and immediately after not only the Equal, but the Greater and the Smaller and all such things, for our present argument is no more about the Equal than about the Beautiful itself, the Good itself, the Just, the Pious, and, as I say, about all those things which we mark with the seal of 'what it is,' both when we are putting questions and answering them. So we must have acquired knowledge of them all before we were born. (75c7-d5)

There are two ways of taking Socrates' statement that "our present argument is no more about the Equal than about...all [the Forms]." Nehamas reads this as saying that the argument for the Equal, involving the compresence of equality and inequality in every visible instance of equality, applies to every Form, and from this it follows that there are no Forms for properties that do not exhibit compresence of opposites. But the statement can be read equally well as expressing a piece of reasoning with two steps. First, Socrates says that the argument for Equality (and the other Forms mentioned explicitly) has shown that there is a Form of Equality. Second, he generalizes by saying that since we take ourselves to know what Equality is, and we have just concluded that there is a Form of Equality, we can draw the same conclusion for any property we take ourselves to know. So if we know what

a person is, there must be a Form of Person that we knew before birth, and so on for other Forms.

Now Nehamas does not recognize the possibility of the second reading, and so gives no reasons for rejecting it; his argument depends on his reading being the only possible way of understanding the text. So his argument is incomplete at best. Moreover, the second reading I have just offered fits Socrates' claims elsewhere in the dialogue better. In particular, contrary to Nehamas' account of the text, some Forms in the *Phaedo* are not incomplete. Malcolm points out the Form of Oddness (103e2–104b4), a Form that no one denies is referenced by the text, and which by itself refutes Nehamas' argument. For being odd is not an incomplete property: there is no sense in which a number is both odd and not odd.<sup>46</sup> Patterson makes the same point about the Form of Life (105d5–6).<sup>47</sup> The reference to it as a Form is unambiguous (αὐτὸ τὸ τῆς ζωῆς εἶδος, “the Form Itself of Life”, 105d5–6), and this form is of paramount importance in the purpose of the dialogue. Life cannot suffer from compresence of opposites, on pain of defeating the whole series of arguments for the immortality of the soul, and the final argument most conspicuously. For if Life is an incomplete property, and things that partake of it suffer from compresence of opposites, then any soul that is alive is also in some sense dead. And this would make nonsense of Socrates' efforts to show that the soul is immortal.

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<sup>46</sup>Malcolm (1991, p. 79). To complete his argument, we should also say that numbers are not odd in relation to anything else; that is, there is no missing term that needs to be filled in to complete the meaning when we say that three is odd.

<sup>47</sup>Patterson (1985, pp. 99–100)

## 1.4 The Form of Soul in the Final Argument

To deny the Form of Soul, a reading of the final argument must sustain two claims: first, each mention of “soul” in the text must refer to an individual soul (and not to a Form, of any variety), and second, the machinery of the argument must work (or come as close to working as plausible) without a Form of Soul in the background. While the first claim can be defended, the second is weak.

It is important to keep distinct two closely related questions. I claim that the final argument in the *Phaedo* presupposes the Form of Soul, although it does not *mention* it. We must take care not to mistake claims about whether or not this Form is *mentioned* in the text for claims about whether or not the Form of Soul is *presupposed* by the text. Gallop, for example, says, “Whether or not Platonic ontology recognizes a Form of Soul, parallel to the Form of Three at 104d5–6, and despite the parallelism of language with that passage, a more coherent argument emerges if such a Form is not read into the present text.”<sup>48</sup> The claim here is that the actual words of the text are best understood as not referring to a Form of Soul, but only to individual souls. I agree, but this does not decide whether the argument given in the words of the text implies or presupposes that there is a Form of Soul. (Gallop presumably accepts my claim as well, since on either of his proposed readings of the argument the Form of Soul is presupposed.)<sup>49</sup>

### Structure of the Argument

I understand the argument as follows.

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<sup>48</sup>Gallop (1975, p. 214)

<sup>49</sup>Gallop (1975, pp. 207–208)

	Text	Claim	Justification
1	100b–102a	$\forall x \forall f$ If $x$ is a particular with quality $f$ , then $x$ is $f$ by the Form $F$ (the “safe answer”).	Assumed <sup>50</sup>
2	102a–d	If $x$ has opposite qualities $f$ and $g$ , then $x$ has the Forms $F$ and $G$ in it.	Step 1 <sup>51</sup>
3	102d–103c	If $F$ and $G$ are opposite Forms, and $f$ and $g$ are the properties corresponding to them, $F$ can never be $g$ , $G$ can never be $f$ , $f$ can never be $g$ , nor can $g$ ever be $f$ .	Assumed
4	103c–104c	$\exists x \exists f \exists g$ ( $x$ is a particular, $f$ and $g$ are opposite properties, and whenever $x$ exists it always has $f$ , never $g$ ). (Introduces notion of “Form-bringers.”)	Steps 1 and 3 <sup>52</sup>
5	104d–105c	Some “Form-bringers” have <i>essential</i> properties.	Examples of three, fire, etc. <sup>53</sup>
6	105c–e	The soul is a Form-bringer having life as an essential property.	Instantiates Step 5 <sup>54</sup>

Forms are introduced in the first part of the argument (100b–102a), so there is no doubt that the argument begins in the context of Forms and their interac-

<sup>50</sup>Implied by 100c4–6. Silverman and Fine recognize that this statement implies a rich domain of Forms (although this need not be the final word on that issue), as the symbolization reflects: Rickless (2007, p. 33), Silverman (2002, p. 59), Fine (2003, p. 37 n. 76).

<sup>51</sup>Most writers agree that the distinction here is between accidental and essential properties: Ebert (2004, p. 371). A few think the section is about the difference between subject and predicate instead: Hackforth (1955, pp. 154–155), Loriaux (1975, p. 111).

<sup>52</sup>Gallop (1975, p. 197) and Dancy (2004, p. 310) note that 103c marks a new phase in the proof.

<sup>53</sup>104d1–3 is discussed by nearly every author writing about this passage, since these lines contain the first definition of the “Form-bringers,” whose identity is one of the major cruxes in the argument. The issue will be discussed below.

<sup>54</sup>This section is sometimes described as the “proof” proper, taking the previous sections as setting up the assumptions put to work here: Rowe (1993, p. 261), Ebert (2004, p. 371).



tion with objects in our world.<sup>55</sup> At the other end, the argument's conclusion is marked by Socrates' saying, "Therefore soul...is most certainly deathless and indestructible and our souls will really dwell in the underworld" (107a). Here the word for soul (ψυχή) occurs without an article, but the context shows that the reference is to individual souls. First, it is a basic claim of the theory of Forms that no Form ever changes or is destroyed, so a proof that the Form of Soul is "deathless and indestructible" would be redundant.<sup>56</sup> Second, the challenge that prompted Socrates to take up this argument was about the individual human soul that enters a body at one time and leaves it at another. "You say it makes no difference whether it enters a body once or many times as far as the fear of each of us is concerned, for it is natural for a man who is no fool to be afraid, if he does not know and cannot prove that the soul is immortal" (95d5–e1). Given this concern for individual souls at the beginning, it would be a gross *non sequitur* if Socrates were to respond by proving the immortality and indestructibility of something else. The challenge motivating the argument shows that individual souls are entities in their own right, and it must be these individuals whose immortality is being proven.<sup>57</sup> So the argument begins with Forms and ends with individual souls.

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<sup>55</sup>Gallop (1975, p. 97), Hackforth (1955, p. 162). Dancy (2004, p. 312), asserts without argument that the proof has no connection to the theory of Forms.

<sup>56</sup>For the claim that Forms do not change, see Harte (2008, p. 202) and Finck (2007, p. 39).

<sup>57</sup>Dorter (1982, p. 151), Bostock (1986, pp. 188–189). Those like Rowe (1993, p. 256), who think individual souls are immanent forms, would not accept this argument. Silverman (2002, p. 63) and Hackforth (1955, p. 156) hold that the argument treats the individual soul like a property or immanent form at some points, but also like a substance at other points.

## The “Safe” Answers

Socrates begins the final argument by explaining what he calls a “safe” answer to any question about why some individual has some property (100d8, e1). He also calls this answer “safe,” “simple,” “naïve,” and “foolish” (100d3–4), and I have symbolized the claim above as “ $\forall x \forall f$  If  $x$  is a particular with quality  $f$ , then  $x$  is  $f$  by the Form  $F$ ” to reflect the generality implied by these epithets. But the answer is anything but safe if one has to worry about whether or not a Form can be found to answer to whatever one might be asked about. The safety of this answer thus implies that the range of Forms is not limited in any significant way, perhaps even that it is completely unlimited. Only on the assumption that the domain of Forms is rich enough to use without worry can the “safe” answers be called upon without fear of contradiction.<sup>58</sup> The safe answers suggest that there is a Form of Soul, especially since souls are the topic of this argument.

## Immanent Forms

Next we can dispense with one of the most commonly discussed interpretive difficulties with the final argument. Up to this point I have mentioned only the transcendent Form of Soul and individual souls as candidates for the reference of “soul” in the text. But Socrates may also introduce a third kind of thing, the “Form in us.”<sup>59</sup> He claims, for example, “not only Tallness itself is never willing to be tall and short at the same time, but also that the tallness in us (τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν μέγεθος) will

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<sup>58</sup>Bostock (1986, p. 197)

<sup>59</sup>Endorsing immanent Forms are van Eck (2008, p. 120 n. 15), Rowe (2003, p. 55, apparently changing his mind from Rowe (1993)), Ebert (2004, pp. 373, 375, 376, 378). Rejecting immanent Forms as separate entities are Dancy (2004, pp. 306, 308–309), Rowe (1993, pp. 249–250, 253), Fine (1986, pp. 304–305), Gallop (1975, pp. 195–196), Loriaux (1975, pp. 113–114).

never admit the short or be overcome...” (102d6–9). This issue need not detain us, however, for any reading that recognizes immanent Forms must also acknowledge a transcendent Form corresponding to each immanent Form.<sup>60</sup> Immanent forms are relevant because some writers think that the word “soul” (ψυχή) in the final argument refers to the immanent form of soul. Suppose this is true even once. On this assumption it follows immediately that there is also a transcendent Form of Soul. For the *Phaedo*’s only account of immanent forms makes them parasitic on transcendent versions of themselves: immanent forms are instances of transcendent Forms. But there can be no instances of transcendent Forms that do not exist. Any reading that tries to deny that there is a Form of Soul, then, will have to insist that every use of “soul” in the text refers to an individual soul. These are the readings I will be discussing from here on, since all others will have to admit the Form of Soul. The question we must ask of these readings is whether, in addition to taking each instance of “soul” to refer to an individual, they can also explain how the final argument works without using the Form of Soul.

### “Form-Bringers”

The part of the argument that is important for my thesis begins at Step Five, which introduces the notion of a “Form-bringer.” This is an entity without an opposite that, when it occupies something else, brings along with it some Form that has an opposite. The thing occupied will not admit the opposite to the Form brought

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<sup>60</sup>I find the suggestion that there can be immanent forms without any corresponding transcendent Form absurd, but it is proposed in a remark by Wagner (2001, p. 18). Dorothea Frede reaches the same conclusion as I have via a slightly different argument: “But how can there be a free-floating immanent form which is neither “ἐν ἡμῖν” nor identical with the form as such “ἐν τῇ φύσει” (as Plato distinguishes them in 103b)?” Frede (1978, p. 290).

along. For example, the Form of Three has no opposite.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, when it occupies something, and thus makes that thing (or that set) into an instance of three, it brings along the Form of Oddness, and compels the sensible thing that is now three to be odd as well.<sup>62</sup> Since the sensible instance of three is odd, it excludes the Form of Evenness, and cannot be even. Thus far the notion of a Form-bringer is more or less clear, but things become more complicated when we try to pin down the details.

We next need to ask, since Socrates never says, what kinds of thing can be Form-bringers: Forms only, or both Forms and individuals?<sup>63</sup> The example of Three and Oddness follows the definition (104d1–3) as an illustration, suggesting that Form-bringers are Forms. But many scholars take the Form-bringers to be individuals.<sup>64</sup> The major reason for thinking that Form-bringers are Forms (whether immanent or transcendent) is the language of “occupying” something, which also describes how Forms behave toward sensible items. Since both Form-bringers and Forms occupy other things, it is argued, this is a signal that the Form-bringers are themselves Forms. On the other hand, souls are also Form-bringers, and the application to the soul is the point of the whole argument. The argument is futile

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<sup>61</sup>Referred to at 104d5–6 as ἡ τῶν τριῶν ιδέα. Most agree that this is an unambiguous reference to the transcendent Form of Three. Hackforth (1955, p. 152) takes the expression to refer to the immanent form of threeness, a suggestion rejected by Gallop (1975, p. 206). Dixsaut (1991, p. 391 n. 310) also understands it as the transcendent Form.

<sup>62</sup>Numbers involve a special complication, in that Plato is thought by some to have distinguished a separate metaphysical category for them. If so, the Form Three might be occupying the *number* three rather than a set of three sensible things. But this makes no difference to the argument here. The issue is discussed by Bostock (1986, p. 185 n. 5), Gallop (1975, p. 206), and O'Brien (1967, 1968, p. 212).

<sup>63</sup>The position that Form-bringers can only be individuals is not plausible, since the examples of Threeness and Oddness (104d1–3) rule it out.

<sup>64</sup>Those reading them as Forms or immanent Forms include Gerson (2003, p. 176 n. 43), Rowe (1993, p. 256), Dixsaut (1991, p. 156). Those taking them as individuals include Ebert (2004, pp. 383–384).

unless it proves the immortality of individual souls, so on this basis it is argued that individual items must also be Form-bringers, at least sometimes, and even if some examples in the text are clearly transcendent Forms. By my count opinion on this point is evenly split.

We are now in a position to see that the group of readings taking Form-bringers to be exclusively Forms entails my thesis that there is a Form of Soul.<sup>65</sup> Since souls are Form-bringers, this type of reading is committed to saying that individual souls are immanent forms, and as I have already argued, this claim entails the existence of the transcendent Form of Soul (see above, page 1.4).<sup>66</sup> So we need not say more about this type of reading, and can turn our attention to the alternative, holding that Form-bringers can be both individuals and Forms.

This type of reading maintains that souls are individuals, something like substances.<sup>67</sup> I next discuss readings of this type, that avoid any commitment to the Form of Soul. So to summarize, we will next examine readings claiming that (1) Form-bringers can be either individuals or Forms, and (2) each use of “soul” in the argument refers to individual souls.

Now the definition of Form-bringers includes two claims: (1) *the thing occupied* by the Form-bringer cannot admit the opposite of the Form brought along, and (2) *the Form-bringer itself* excludes the opposite of the one it brings along. I will refer to the second claim as the Form-bringer Exclusion Principle (FEP). In the pre-

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<sup>65</sup>Here I include those who say the soul is treated “like” a form, since I see no alternative other than holding that souls *are* immanent forms or that they are substantial things in their own right. Those who read the argument this way include Silverman (2002, p. 63), Keyt (1963, p. 169) and Hackforth (1955, pp. 161–162).

<sup>66</sup>I am unaware of anyone who thinks the individual soul is the *transcendent* Form.

<sup>67</sup>Authors who attribute to Plato the view that the individual soul is an invisible individual include Gerson (2003, p. 95), Rowe (2003, p. 164), Fine (1993, p. 249 n. 27), Bostock (1986, pp. 188–189), Gallop (1975, p. 222).

vious example, when the Form Three occupies a sensible set of items, and causes them to be three, both the set occupied and *the Form Three itself* are incompatible with the Form Even.<sup>68</sup> The FEP is crucial to proving the soul immortal: since souls bring life to bodies, and we can observe that those bodies are alive, the FEP allows Socrates to reason from this observable effect to an unobservable cause, drawing his conclusion that souls are themselves immortal. The FEP will figure in our account at a later stage of the analysis.

### The Examples of Form-Bringers

Socrates gives two extended examples of Form-bringers: fire/snow and three. He introduces the topic of Form-bringers by pointing out that some occupied things do not admit the opposites of qualities brought by a Form-bringer.

“So the hot is something other than fire, and the cold is something other than snow?...You think, I believe, that being snow it will not admit the hot...” (103d2–6).

Fire and snow here must be individual, sensible fires and lumps of snow — presumably this is why Cebes is able to say without reflection what snow will do in the presence of the hot. The point would require more argument if the Forms of Fire and Snow were meant.<sup>69</sup> Now the Form-bringers, and the FEP in particular,

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<sup>68</sup>Form-bringers are defined twice, at 104d1–3 and 105a2–5. Both definitions allow more than one grammatical understanding, either saying that Form-bringers *do* the occupying, or that they are the things that are *occupied*. Gallop (1975, p. 202 ff.) gives the most detailed account of both possibilities. But the difference is most relevant for trying to decide what kind of things can be Form-bringers, which we do not need to decide here.

<sup>69</sup>Those taking “snow” and “fire” as physical individuals, include: Ebert (2004, p. 380). Those taking them as forms: Gerson (2003, p. 94), Bostock (1986, p. 185). Those who think it unclear which is meant: Silverman (2002, p. 61), Archer-Hind (1894, p. 109).

involve three roles: (1) the Form-bringer, (2) the thing occupied, and (3) the opposite Form brought along. Here (at 103d2–6) Socrates has mentioned fire and Heat, the former a thing occupied by a Form-bringer, the latter the opposite Form being brought along, but the Form-bringer itself has not been named. This is understandable because Socrates has yet to define Form-bringers: he describes the role they play toward other things, and then introduces Form-bringers as the things that fit that role. Given this structure, the Form-bringers that Socrates has in mind in this passage (103d2–6) can only be the Forms of Fire and Snow. Since these are Forms of substances, this reconfirms the rich domain of Forms found in the *Phaedo*. It also provides a precedent for what I will shortly argue about the Form of Soul: the Forms of Fire and Snow are implicated in this argument, but are never mentioned directly.

How might one resist the conclusion that the Forms of Fire and Snow are to be understood in the background here?<sup>70</sup> Consider the hypothesis that a physical lump of snow “occupies” other physical items (e.g. a piece of ground), and makes them cold; this view looks promising as a way to avoid acknowledging that Forms of Fire and Snow must be understood here.<sup>71</sup> But on this view Socrates has mentioned two different roles than we supposed, for if we suppose that snow occupies other physical items, it is itself the Form-bringer. Instead of mentioning roles (2) and (3), as I just supposed, Socrates has mentioned roles (1) and (3): snow as Form-

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<sup>70</sup>This is, I think, the most natural way of developing the explicit positions of scholars such as Nehamas who deny that there is a Form of Soul. Some think that the fire and snow mentioned here are physical things rather than Forms, so a skeptic about the Form of Soul would likely adopt this claim, and then argue that not only are the things mentioned in the text physical items, but no transcendent items need be understood in the background. But as I shall argue, this position is untenable.

<sup>71</sup>Bostock (1986, p. 184)

bringer and cold as the opposite brought along. But this does not fit the text, since Socrates immediately adds “...being snow it will not admit the hot” (103d5–6). This statement and the parallel one about fire (103d5–6) treat snow and fire as filling role (2), the thing occupied, not role (1), the Form-bringer. The text thus implies that the Form of Snow (role 1) occupies the lump of sensible snow (role 2), thus making it snow, and at the same time bringing along the Form of Cold (role 3).<sup>72</sup> This is just the “safe” explanation Socrates has already introduced. The same reasoning shows that a Form of Fire is also assumed in this passage.<sup>73</sup> Finally, Socrates brings back the safe explanation explicitly when he says, “what the Form of Three occupies must be not only three but also odd” (104d5–7). This case shows that the Form of Three is the Form-bringer, and confirms again that Forms of Fire and Snow are assumed in the previous example.

As Socrates prepares to apply his notion of Form-bringers to the case of souls, then, both of his extended examples have presupposed the “safe” explanation as part of the more “sophisticated” explanation he is now advocating.<sup>74</sup> The sophisti-

<sup>72</sup>Bestor (1988, p. 41) takes the same view.

<sup>73</sup>Another reading of this passage may also be possible: one might claim that when Socrates observes that “being snow it will not admit the hot,” “snow” refers not to the thing occupied (role 2), but to a Form-bringer (role 1). This would then be an early statement of the FEP. The difficulty with this reading is that these early statements of the FEP occur at 103d5–6 (for snow) and 103d10–11 (for fire). Form-bringers are first defined a full page later (104d1–3) — but the first definition fails to state the FEP. Only the second definition (105a2–5) expresses the FEP. So this reading needs to explain why Socrates begins by giving an example of the FEP, but then fails to define it on his first try, and only gets the definition right a page and a half after giving the example.

<sup>74</sup>Agreeing that the “safe” answers are not superseded, but merely supplemented by the new answers are Dancy (2004, p. 310), Rowe (1993, p. 259), Bestor (1988, p. 36). Most discussion of this point focuses on the logical properties of each kind of answer. So most writers agree that the “safe” answers are both necessary and sufficient conditions, and that the new answers are merely sufficient: Silverman (2002, p. 57), Dixsaut (1991, p. 394 n. 317). Ebert and Bostock take the case of souls to be necessary and sufficient, and thus out of line with the other “sophisticated” answers: Ebert (2004, p. 391), Bostock (1986, p. 189). But I see no evidence of this in the text; one might cite 105d1–2 for support, but on my reading all this says is that soul is always sufficient, not that it is necessary for life. Hackforth alone (among the authors I have surveyed) takes the “sophisti-



cated answers are just his earlier safe answers supplemented with Form-bringers. So the sophisticated answers say that the Form of Fire occupies an individual fire (the safe answer), and brings with it the Form Hot (the sophisticated part); the Form Three occupies a sensible group, making it a set of three things (the safe answer), bringing with it the Form Odd (the sophisticated answer). In the first case the resulting sensible thing is both a fire and hot; in the second, it is a group of three and is odd. (In explaining each of these cases, we could add a level of immanent forms; this would make the explanation more complicated, but would not change the essential features we are concerned with.)

### A Shift in the Pattern

After explaining these cases and defining the Form-bringers for the second time, Socrates inserts two briefer examples before turning to the soul. These two examples are crucial to his argument, and also execute a fascinating sleight of hand. The first seems to be a repetition of the earlier case of fire and heat; the second involves fever, a body and sickness; when he has introduced these two new cases, Socrates turns immediately to souls, arguing that they bring the Form of Life to the bodies they occupy, so they are Form-bringers, so they themselves exclude Death. The fever and soul cases both specify the thing occupied (role 2) as “a body” (σώματι, 105b9, c3), just as the case involving souls will do (105c8). These two cases also effect a transition from the earlier examples (of fire, snow, and three): in those cases the Form-bringer (role 1) and the thing occupied (role 2) were eponymous,

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cated” answers to be both necessary and sufficient, and therefore finds them philosophically weak: Hackforth (1955, p. 161).

and the Form-bringer was itself a Form. In these two new, transitional cases, however, the first seems to follow the earlier pattern, but on closer examination one sees that this pattern no longer fits. On the earlier pattern, the Form of Fire occupied a “body”, and thereby made that body an *instance* of fire. But this pattern does not match the new cases of fever and souls, for in neither of those cases is the Form-bringer eponymous with the thing occupied. This forces us to notice that a second way of reading the new fire example is also possible: an individual fire is the Form-bringer (role 1), and it “occupies” some flammable body such as a stick (role 2). Here the Form-bringer does not make the thing occupied into an *instance of fire*, but makes it *fiery* or makes it the case that *it is on fire*. Either interpretation is possible for this fire case, depending on whether we read it to match the earlier or the following examples.<sup>75</sup>

The second example of fever, however, cannot work both ways: the Form Fever, by occupying a body, does not make it into an *instance of fever*.<sup>76</sup> Here the more usual meaning of *σῶμα* moves to the foreground, since the case involves an instance of fever coming into a *human* body.<sup>77</sup> The Form-bringer (role 1) can only be an individual instance of fever, since the body it occupies (role 2) becomes not a

<sup>75</sup>Weller comments on the aptness of fire as analogue for the soul: “Fire as elusive, flickering, and not quite a body among others yet capable of heating them seems just the right analogue for the soul. As an element present in bodies, especially ones not in flames, fire is at least as seductive a model as immanent characters for understanding how souls are present in bodies. Moreover, it’s easy to see how one might conclude from the fact that fire, as what heats, is itself hot that the soul, as what vivifies, is itself alive.” (Weller 1995, p. 44)

<sup>76</sup>For various comments on these examples, see Ebert (2004, p. 388). Each author chooses a different dimension of the cases to focus on. Philosophers usually try to fit these cases into as few types as possible, and the difficulty of the passage comes from the fact that no general scheme will fit all the cases here, plus the fact that the cases can be handled individually in many ways, even before taking up the problem of making them consistent with one another. It seems possible that the diversity of patterns, generally seen as a philosophical weakness, may be present intentionally because Plato considered it a rhetorical strength.

<sup>77</sup>Liddell et al. (1996, s.v.)

fever, but *feverish*.<sup>78</sup> Presumably the individual fever also participates in the Form of Fever, and is a fever in virtue of this sharing; but this relation is not mentioned at this point in the text. Instead, an individual fever (as Form-bringer, role 1) occupies a human body (role 2), and the body is made feverish. This case thus abandons the previous pattern, in which Form-bringer and thing occupied were eponymous, but parallels the following example, that of souls. So the sophisticated explanation for souls is that they occupy (human) bodies, and in doing so make them (not into a soul but) ἐμψυχος, “ensouled” or “alive.”<sup>79</sup> The soul, as Form-bringer, brings with it the Form of Life.<sup>80</sup> The Form Life excludes the Form Death from the body (so long as the soul occupies it), and the soul itself excludes the Form Death, since the soul participates in the Form of Life.<sup>81</sup>

What Plato has done, then, is to introduce the schema of Form-bringers using two putatively simple cases with the same structure, those of fire/snow and three. But this structure does not match the one Plato needs for individual souls, so he shifts the pattern without calling attention to it, in the examples of fire and fever. Rhetorically, the text takes advantage of the sense of clarity conferred by

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<sup>78</sup>Or more precisely, the Form-bringer can only be an individual instance of fever on the assumption that this case is a parallel with the case of souls, which follows immediately in the text. Since the souls there must be individuals, the fever must also be an individual item. Authors with a similar analysis of the fever case: Dorter (1982, p. 147), Rowe (1993, p. 260), Gallop (1975, p. 212), Archer-Hind (1894, pp. 114–115). Silverman (2002, p. 63) says we cannot decide what kind of entities are involved here, but agrees that interpretation of the cases should be controlled by the case of souls, which is the goal of the argument.

<sup>79</sup>Ebert notices this as well at (2004, p. 395).

<sup>80</sup>The fact that the soul “occupies” the body in a way similar to that in which immanent tallness “occupies” Simmias leads Hackforth and Keyt to think that Plato is treating the soul “like” an immanent form here. But a soul occupying a body is not a parallel to tallness occupying a body: in the latter case, the body is made tall, while in the former the body is not made into a soul. Keyt (1963, p. 169), Hackforth (1955, p. 156). Weller summarizes some features of the text that make this view attractive, although he rejects it (1995, p. 37).

<sup>81</sup>Socrates also associates soul with life as its function at *Republic* 353d3–e3.

the eponymous relation between the Form-bringer and the thing occupied in the early examples of fire/snow and three; it then proceeds as if the same simplicity obtained for the later examples. The shift in structure is so artfully hidden that it is hard to believe Plato is unaware of it. Socrates establishes the soul as a Form-bringer with the empirical claim that the presence of a soul makes bodies alive (105c8–10). The FEP then allows him to conclude that souls themselves excludes Death.

These final steps are the important ones for deciding whether the argument for immortality assumes the Form of Soul in the background. We are now ready to present further arguments for the Form of Soul, based on the foregoing analysis of the final argument.

### The Safe Answers Imply the Form of Soul

We have already seen that the safe answers are part of the notion of Form-bringers (i.e., the Forms of Snow and Fire at 103d). The proof of the soul's immortality is carried out two pages later (105c–d). If there is no Form of Soul, then the safe answer is no longer valid when we reach 105c–d. But the text continues to invoke the safe answers all the way to 106d.

When Socrates introduces his last two examples (fire and fever) just before getting to the soul, he says that “beyond (παρά) that safe answer, which I spoke of first, I see *another* safe answer” (ἀπόκρισιν...ἄλλην ὁρῶν ἀσφάλειαν, 105b7–8). There is no indication here that the first safe answer is being rejected. He then rehearses the safe answer at each stage in his questioning in order to explain that he is not now looking for those answers, but for more “sophisticated” ones:

“...my reply would not be that safe and ignorant one, that it is heat...” (105b9–c1)

“...if you ask me what, on coming into a body, makes it sick, I will not say sickness...” (105c2–3)

“...if asked the presence of what in a number makes it odd, I will not say oddness...” (105c4–5)

These lines suggest that for Socrates the safe answers remain perfectly acceptable. He does not say or suggest that there is anything wrong with those answers, only that they are relatively uninformative where the more sophisticated answer is available. Further, in the question about souls, the safe answer to “what is it that, present in a body, makes it living?” would be the Form of Life. This Form is mentioned explicitly at 106d5–6, where it seems to be invoked as an especially clear example of a Form that is indestructible. This is further evidence that the safe answers are still valid; they are just not the focus of Socrates’ questions in this section.<sup>82</sup> Socrates’ use of the safe answers throughout his argument about souls suggests that safe answers about souls would be equally acceptable to him, that is, that he would acknowledge the Form of Soul.

### An Elimination Argument

A second argument for the Form of Soul notes that the first move in the final argument is to re-introduce the Forms. “I assume the existence of a Beautiful, itself by itself, of a Good and a Great and all the rest. If you grant me these and agree that they exist, I hope to show you the cause as a result, and to find the soul to be

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<sup>82</sup>Rowe also argues that the safe answers remain valid, citing 107b4–9: Rowe (1993, p. 259).

immortal” (100b5–9). Socrates thus indicates that some Forms are necessary for his argument.

Now if souls participate in the Form of Life without the mediation of a Form of Soul, it will not have been necessary to invoke the Forms in general. The argument’s key claim will just be that souls are essentially alive. Putting that claim in a form that mentions the Form of Life will not accomplish the goal of showing that souls are necessarily or permanently alive. All we know about the Form of Life is that it is the essence of Life, or that it is what it is to be alive. This much implies no connection with souls. There is thus no way of reaching Socrates’ conclusion using only the Form of Life.

It is worth emphasizing that Socrates says nothing that would justify the claim that individual souls must always participate in the Form of Life. Individual souls, according to his own account of them, are sometimes very unstable. If they are unstable with respect to other properties, there is no reason for assuming — and Socrates does not try to argue — that they will be stable with respect to the property of life. Nor is there any logical connection between souls and life or the Form of Life. The problem arises precisely because there is no such connection: it is all too easy to imagine that souls can die or be destroyed.

It must therefore be the case that Socrates needs at least one other Form for his proof. He mentions several as he leads up to his conclusion: the Forms of Three, Snow, Fire, etc. But these have no direct application to souls, so they cannot aid his proof. So there is at least one Form that Socrates needs for his proof, but it is neither the Form of Life, nor Three, nor Oddness, Snow, Fire, etc. By elimination, it looks as if the Form Socrates needs can only be the Form of Soul.

## The Earlier Progress of the Dialogue

Socrates' earlier characterization of Forms and particulars began by ascribing the properties of stability and unchangingness to the Forms, and then *extending* those properties to souls in virtue of the resemblance created by the invisibility of souls. Socrates never claims that souls are stable in virtue of any quality of their own. So whatever stability souls have, they have in virtue of *resembling* Forms. If Socrates were now to argue that souls are stable enough to sustain a permanent and necessary relation to the Form of Life, he would be reversing the order of his earlier inference. Nothing Socrates has said has prepared the claim that souls have enough stability *of their own* to justify such a stable relation to the Form of Life, and nothing about the Form of Life implies that it has this relation with souls.

Second, supposing the first point is wrong — that Socrates does mean to claim (80b) that souls are just as stable in their own right as the Forms — there is the further problem of the subsequent progress of the discussion. All the characters agree at 80b that souls are much more like Forms than sensible objects. But the further course of the discussion shows that even this leaves room to doubt whether souls are immortal. The assumptions at 80b are thus insufficient for proving souls immortal, and Socrates realizes this. It is unconvincing, then, to suggest that he now recycles this earlier assumption, and tries to use it to finish off the final argument, when it has already been shown insufficient. Nor does anything he has added in the final argument, if combined with this earlier assumption, yield a valid argument that souls have the required relation to the Form of Life.

## Why are Souls Bringers of Life?

The proof has two phases, corresponding to two problems Socrates has to solve: first, he needs to show that as long as an individual soul exists and is a soul, it is necessarily alive. Call this Phase A; it runs from 102a–105e. But that, of course, is not enough. He must also show that individual souls cannot be destroyed; unlike lumps of snow, which are necessarily cold so long as they remain lumps of snow, but can also be melted, Socrates needs to show that souls always remain souls. If he can do both, he will have shown the immortality of individual souls. He tries to accomplish the second task in Phase B, 105e–107a. This part of the argument is inadequate, so the argument does not succeed overall. But this does not prevent us from drawing substantive conclusions about how the argument is supposed to work, based on its goal and the tools Socrates has given himself for reaching that goal. In what follows, I will focus on Phase A.

The key claim in Socrates' argument is that souls are bringers of the Form of Life. This claim is justified by empirical observation, from the fact that bodies occupied by souls are alive. The FEP then allows Socrates to conclude that souls have the Form of Life in themselves as well, and so also exclude the Form of Death.

One weak point in this argument is the alleged connection between individual souls and the Form of Life; what does Socrates think justifies this part of his argument? Broadly speaking, the following two accounts seem to exhaust the plausible answers to this question.

One is that Socrates just *asserts* that individual souls have and bring with them the Form of Life. On this view, whether or not there is a Form of Soul, the important relation, the one doing the “work” here, is the one *directly* between individual souls



and the Form of Life. But this is perilously close to question-begging. Socrates spends many pages of the most important part of the *Phaedo* erecting a vast edifice of metaphysics — if this reading is correct, the argument is all smoke, designed to conceal what is nearly a bare assertion. The alternative is more respectable: to think that individual souls are related to the Form of Life via their essential relation to the Form of Soul, and because the Form of Soul is essentially related to the Form of Life.<sup>83</sup> This gives a point to the arguments found in the text, although it does not change the fact that those arguments are flawed.

The safe answers are introduced, in the first instance, to show that every individual (i.e. non-Form) item in the universe has one permanent and necessary relation, namely its relation to its eponymous Form. Individual souls have at least one necessary property, which is that they are souls. In the terms of the Form-theory, this means that individual souls necessarily participate in the Form of Soul. This necessary and permanent property is the best place to look for the necessity and permanence in the relation between souls and the Form of Life. The eponymous relation to a thing's own Form is necessary, has the strength of logical necessity, and persists so long as the thing remains whatever it is. So long as a hula-hoop remains a hula-hoop, it is logically certain that it participates in the Form of Hula-Hoop. So long as souls are souls, they must participate in the Form of Soul.

It is not hard to see why Socrates would prefer to explain the participation of individual souls in the Form of Life via their participation in the Form of Soul. The

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<sup>83</sup>Gerson (2003, pp. 94, 176 n. 43), Gerson (2002, p. 93), and Bestor (1988, pp. 30, 37–38) endorse this view of the argument. Bestor also argues that there is ample precedent in Plato's texts for relations among Forms. For they are described in hierarchical organizations, as co-present, as always co-present, and as incompatible with one another: Bestor (1988, pp. 39–40). For a sample of how baroque things can become when one tries to untangle the relations among a particular and more than one Form, see Weller (1995, p. 40).

theory of the *Phaedo* emphasizes at every turn that stability and permanence are found only in the Forms, while non-Form items are notoriously unstable. It would be surprising to suggest that there can be necessary and permanent relations unless both their terms are themselves permanent. No individual item has this kind of permanence, suggesting that necessary and permanent relations hold only between transcendent Forms. For things that have necessary properties in addition to their eponymous property of being what they are, these further properties must be explained by relations among Forms, not by relations directly between individuals and Forms. Thus, sensible snow necessarily participates in the Form of Snow, and this Form necessarily brings the Form of Cold with it. In virtue of this relation, sensible snow is also obliged to participate in the Form of Cold, and thus prevented from participating in the Form of Heat. Souls, on my proposed reading, work the same way. Individual souls necessarily participate in the Form of Soul. Since all Forms are perfectly stable, a relation between the Forms of Soul and Life will also be perfectly stable. Once something is an individual soul, then, it will go on stably participating in the Forms of both Soul and Life, and thus remain alive permanently and necessarily. While this line of thought fails to provide the full proof of individual immortality Socrates wants, it is an interesting and inventive attempt at that proof. This is an argument worthy of ascription to Plato, whereas the alternative reduces to question-begging couched in unnecessary complications.

## 1.5 Arguments Against the Form of Soul

I now turn to three commentators who have produced arguments against the Form of Soul, or who might easily be thought to have done so.

Dancy closes his recent book with a forceful declaration that initially seems to contradict my claim:

...the repeated references to Forms in the course of this argument may create the illusion that there is some *essential* connection between the Theory of Forms and immortality. There is not. For as soon as Socrates fleshed out the Safe (but unlearned) Theory of Causality into the Learned Theory, he lost all *essential* reference to Forms. The intermediaries that import predicates into host entities in the Learned Theory are entities that possess the predicates as essential predicates, and that is all that is required. If you explain the presence of heat by appealing to the presence of fire, you have, we may grant, appealed to the presence of something that is indelibly hot. And that explanation is just as good if your explanation of fire's essential possession of heat is quite alien to the Theory of Forms, or, for that matter, if you have no explanation at all. But the proof of the immortality of the soul depends only on that aspect of the Learned Theory: it depends on nothing specific to the Theory of Forms.<sup>84</sup>

Unfortunately, these are the last lines of the book, and they do not explain Dancy's claim in much detail. Dancy is claiming that there is no *essential*, i.e. *necessary* connection between the proof of immortality and the theory of Forms. For the same proof of immortality could be run by appealing just to the notion of an essential property, even if, as he imagines, one has no explanation whatsoever of what makes that property essential. This claim is true as far as it goes, so I am inclined to think this is what Dancy intends. But we must not confuse it with the claim that

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<sup>84</sup>Dancy (2004, 312–313, emphasis added)

the *Phaedo* is best read as arguing for the soul's immortality without any reliance on or reference to the theory of Forms. As I have just argued, *this* claim is false; the theory of Forms, and more specifically, the "safe" answers are woven into the text all the way to the end of the proof. Again, the basis for the exclusion of opposites is that the Form of the opposite is excluded: 104d1–3, d14, e1, 105a8–b1, b2 all mention the Form of the appropriate opposite. This also shows that the theory of Forms is involved in the argument.

I turn now to Gallop, whose painstaking commentary argues against finding the Form of Soul in the final argument. He draws no overall conclusions about the argument other than his discussions of particular points, so it is hard to do justice to the nuanced position that emerges. One part of his commentary takes roughly the position that no Form of Soul is mentioned explicitly in the text, and that reading the Form of Soul as part of the argument (whether or not it is explicitly mentioned) would yield an incoherent argument. It is not clear, however, whether Gallop means for this last claim to supersede the analysis he offers earlier (pp.203–205), in which he gives two alternate versions for the whole argument, and *both* invoke a Form of Soul. So Gallop at least sometimes acknowledges the need for the Form of Soul. Here, however, I consider his negative comments toward the Form of Soul in their own right, in order to show that they do not succeed in ruling it out.

At 105c9–d12, where the final proof of immortality is carried out, Gallop begins, "Some commentators have wished to understand ['Soul'], rather, as the *Form* of Soul..."<sup>85</sup> He does not say who has read the passage this way, but such a reading

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<sup>85</sup>Gallop (1975, p. 213)

seems impossible, as he himself recognizes. There would be no point in proving the immortality of the Form of Soul. But to illustrate the problems with this reading, Gallop takes up a schema proposed by Vlastos. (I will not repeat Vlastos' formula here, as it belongs to the class of readings that immediately result in acknowledging the Form of Soul.) But to continue with Gallop's analysis, he argues that Vlastos' schema would lead to one of two alternatives, neither of which is acceptable. These are (followed by Gallop's comments):

1. 'A soul is alive because, being a soul, it must participate in the Form Soul, and since the Form Soul entails the Form Life, a soul must also participate in the Form Life, and hence a soul must be alive.' or
2. 'A body is alive because, being besouled [or being a soul (sic)] it must participate in the Form Soul, and since the Form Soul entails the Form Life, the body must also participate in the Form Life, and so must be alive.'

But neither (1) nor (2) is satisfactory. (1) will not fit the text, for it ignores the soul's relationship to the body, which cannot be eliminated, even if the 'subtle' answers of 105b-d are taken as Forms...And (2) clearly does not yield the conclusion for which Socrates wishes to argue. He needs a conclusion not about body but about soul. Moreover, he needs a conclusion not just about the Form of Soul, which is 'immortal' like any other Form, but about a particular soul.<sup>86</sup>

The problems raised here are illusory. First, the best reading must take "soul" in the final argument to be an individual. Second, the two alternatives can be conjoined without contradiction, and the text seems to endorse both lines of reasoning. So (1) does not neglect the relation to the body, because (2) explains that; and

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<sup>86</sup>Gallop (1975, p. 214)

although (2) yields no conclusion about the individual soul, that job is done by (1). Socrates makes the argument in (2) because it provides empirical evidence that the individual soul is a Form-bringer; (1) is the best explanation of Socrates' reasoning justifying the conclusion that the individual soul is immortal. So Gallop's comments give no reason for rejecting the Form of Soul.

Dixsaut makes the following interesting argument — unlike the two cases already surveyed, this one actually is, in part, an argument against the existence of a Form of Soul:

[sc. S'il y avait une Forme de l'Ame,] Un autre type d'argumentation serait requis : il faudrait montrer qu'une âme ne peut jamais cesser de participer à l'idée d'Ame. On est libre de penser que Platon *aurait dû* poser cette question : force est de constater que, ni dans le *Phédon* ni ailleurs, il ne la pose.<sup>87</sup>

But no argument is required to show that a soul must always participate in the Form of Soul, *so long as it remains a soul*: if it ceases to participate in the Form of Soul, it will no longer be a soul. The problem, of course, is to show that a soul will always go on participating in the Form of Soul, and so will always continue participating in the Form of Life. But this is precisely what Socrates tries to do, albeit unsuccessfully, at 105e11–107a1.<sup>88</sup> He attempts to do this by showing that a soul will always continue participating in the Form of Life, but given the cursory and unsatisfactory nature of the argument, we have little to go on in deciding how Socrates thinks he can show this. So Socrates does try to do what Dixsaut says he would try to do if there were a Form of Soul. In my view it is not possible to build

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<sup>87</sup>Dixsaut (1991, p. 397 n. 321)

<sup>88</sup>And, as we will see below, again at *Republic* X 608c–611a.

an argument for or against the Form of Soul based on that last abortive stretch of argument.<sup>89</sup>

It might be thought that there is something wrong with this conclusion, for there is something discomfiting about a Form of Soul.<sup>90</sup> This objection is easily answered. For the final argument explicitly involves Forms of Life and Death, and these have difficulties similar to those of a Form of Soul. A Form of Death may be even worse than that of Life, if it is explained as a Form of the destruction or separation of something.<sup>91</sup> But the structure of the argument requires the Form of Death (105d9), since the argument is built around pairs of opposite Forms. Since Socrates permits himself Forms of Life and Death, it is hard to object to the Form of Soul for this reason.

## 1.6 The Form of Soul in *Republic X*

There is another argument for the soul's immortality in *Republic X* (608c–611a). This argument is brief, and has often been dismissed. Annas, for example, calls it “one of the few really embarrassingly bad arguments in Plato.”<sup>92</sup> But Eric Brown has recently given the argument a spirited and convincing defense. He does not

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<sup>89</sup>Most scholars agree on the failure of this last argument: Bostock (1986, pp. 191–193), Gallop (1975, p. 216), Loriaux (1975, p. 131). Some work hard to find something to redeem it: Burnet (1911, p. 123), Archer-Hind (1894, p. 116), Bluck (1954, pp. 191–194) (who admits the difficulty, but looks hard for a way out), and Dorter (1982, pp. 151–157).

<sup>90</sup>I would suggest that the Form of Soul is unsettling because one tends to imagine Forms as objects, from a second- or third-person point of view, while one tends to think of souls from the first-person point of view. It is not at all clear how to think of an object from a first-person point of view, so the Form of Soul seems incoherent. Perhaps this is why Archer-Hind found it a metaphysical monstrosity.

<sup>91</sup>Gallop (1975, p. 218)

<sup>92</sup>Annas (1981, p. 345)

claim that the argument is cogent, but that Plato “pulls together some interesting, intelligible, non-question-begging, and typically Platonic assumptions, and he constructs a valid argument from these.”<sup>93</sup> I think Brown has carried his point. My purpose here, however, is not to defend the argument, but to show that the most straightforward way of filling in the gaps in the text presupposes a Form of Soul in the background. There are two reasons for this: first, the earlier part of Book X shares its terms for Forms with terms used for souls in this argument, and second, the claims from the *Phaedo*’s final argument easily fit Socrates’ claims in this one.

The argument for immortality occurs roughly in the middle of Book X, following a discussion of why poetry must be banished from Kallipolis. This passage makes central use of the theory of Forms: the very first move Socrates makes is to posit a Form “in connection with each set of many things to which we apply the same name” (596a6–8). Whereas the *Phaedo* merely hints several times that there is a Form for each set bearing the same name, Socrates says so explicitly here. In this section he also goes further than assigning a Form to each natural kind, since here he discusses the Form of Bed. He thus puts Forms for artifacts on the table as well. Souls are likelier to be a natural kind than artifacts.<sup>94</sup> If there is a Form of Bed in Book X, then *a fortiori* there should also be a Form of Soul.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup>The negative reaction is summarized by Brown (1997, p. 297, quotation from p. 298). Those finding grave difficulties with the argument include: Purshouse (2006, p. 132), Gerson (2003, p. 125), Waterfield (1993, p. 450), Annas (1981, p. 345), Halliwell (1988, pp. 159–162), White (1979, pp. 259–260), Grube (1974, p. 252 n. 16), Cross and Woosley (1964, p. 119). Perhaps the best indication of its reception is that most books on Plato simply ignore it.

<sup>94</sup>Based on the construction of the soul described in the *Timaeus*, one might regard it as a kind of artifact, but I will assume here that it is a natural kind.

<sup>95</sup>There is a strand of interpretation that does not take 596a at face value, but proposes an alternative translation, on which Socrates does not claim that there is a Form for every general term. This reading begins from Smith (1917). While Smith’s article is interesting, it is far from conclusive



We next need to look more closely at the Form-referring language in the first part of Book X, to see how it continues unbroken into the argument for immortality. Early in Book X Socrates calls the Forms ἰδέαι (596a6, b1, b5, b7). In addition to this easily recognized term, he has two other locutions that unambiguously refer to Forms in this discussion. He calls the Form of Bed “what we say it is to be a bed” (ὃ δὴ φαμεν εἶναι ὃ ἐστὶ κλίνη, 597a1–2). Finally, he calls the Form of Bed “the one that is in nature” (ἡ ἐν τῇ φύσει οὓσα, 597b4–5). The last two locutions — being “what a bed is” and the bed “in nature” — are used together again just after this (597c1–3). The third type of expression is in fact Socrates’ most usual way of referring to Forms in this section: he uses expressions with the root φυ- repeatedly in this passage to indicate that the Form is something “natural,” “in nature,” “produced naturally,” and so on.<sup>96</sup>

When Socrates begins his argument for the immortality of the soul, one of his first claims is that “there is a good and a bad for each thing” (608e7), or “a natural (σύμφυτον) badness and sickness for everything” (609a3, a8).<sup>97</sup> His word for “natural,” σύμφυτον, is derived from those he has just been using to refer to Forms (see note 106). Here he uses an adjective, while in the earlier passage Socrates chose

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— Smith himself never definitely endorses the reading he proposes, and appeals for help settling the issue. Sonnenschein (1918) calls Smith’s argument into serious question. I consider Smith’s proposal to have been refuted by Sharma (2006), who also provides a survey of other scholars who have followed or been tempted by this view. Those who cite Smith typically do not endorse the reading, but call it interesting and note that it has not been proven: Nehamas (1998, p. 272 n. 31), Patterson (1985, p. 203 n. 8), Fine (1980, p. 213 n. 25). One who does endorse Smith’s reading is Burnyeat (1992, p. 298 n. 4). But he is refuted by Fine (1993, pp. 304–305 n. 40). In addition to 596a, Socrates also posits a single Form for every set of many things at Republic 507b1–6.

<sup>96</sup>Forms of φύσις occur at 597b5, c2, d2, d6, 598a2; forms of φύω at 597c5, d2, d4 (in compound); φυτεύω at 597c4; also see Burnet (1911, ad 103b5). The *Phaedo* also uses πεφυκέναι (102c1 and 104a3) to indicate an essential predication that is to be explained by referring to a Form, also noted by Burnet (1911, ad 102b8).

<sup>97</sup>Brown thinks it better not to make this the first premise of the argument, but this decision does not matter for my purpose here (1997, p. 318 n. 7).

nouns (φύσις) or verbs (φύω).<sup>98</sup> But all these words share the sense of “natural,” “in nature.” These terms were used in the first section of Book X to refer to Forms, and Socrates continues using them in the argument for immortality. There is no sign that their reference has changed, so they apparently still refer to Forms. The shared vocabulary, the explicit reference to the Form of Bed, and the One Over Many argument at 596a, all show that when the topic shifts to immortality and individual souls become the focus, the Form of Soul is to be understood.

As the argument for immortality ends, the conversation shifts to the soul’s nature. Socrates argues that the soul “in its truest nature” (τῇ ἀληθεστάτῃ φύσει, 611b1) is not “full of multicolored variety and dissimilarity and conflict with itself.” Again, roughly a page further, Socrates uses the expression “the soul itself” (αὐτῇ ψυχῇ, 612b2). These expressions are a direct indication that a Form of Soul is present in the background. Given the metaphysics already postulated in Book X, to refer to the “truest nature” of something can only mean its Form, or the way the thing is when it is most successfully imitating its own Form. “The soul itself” is also most naturally understood as either the Form of Soul, or perhaps better, the way an individual soul exists when it is most like the Form. Finally, it is also worth noting that Socrates refers to the original appearance of Glaucus at one point as “what he naturally was” (οἷος ἦν φύσει, 611d4–5). This expression too, given the analogy between Glaucus and the soul, is strongly suggestive that what the soul naturally was, is either a Form or very similar to the Form.

The final argument of the *Phaedo* can be conjoined with the claims here to help explain the claim that there is “a natural badness and sickness for nearly every-

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<sup>98</sup>Variations on the root also occur at 609b6 (πεφυκότος) and 610a2 (ἐμφυτον).

thing” (609a3).<sup>99</sup> There Socrates appeals to relations among Forms in order to ground essential properties (e.g. fire’s essential property of being hot, or three’s of being odd).<sup>100</sup> A thing *x* has an essential property because the Form *X* brings another Form along with it.<sup>101</sup> The claims about function in the *Republic* copy and extend that metaphysical schema from the *Phaedo*. First, the virtue and vice of anything are opposites in the same sense as the *Phaedo* discusses: anything participating in the Form of its own virtue will not be able to participate in the Form of its vice (at the same time, in the same way). That is, the virtue and vice of each thing exclude each other. Second, the Book X argument for immortality suggests an explanation for what *makes* something the vice of something else: something is a vice if it causes a thing it enters to lose its share of its own eponymous Form. So Disease is the vice of bodies, because it (eventually) causes a body to stop participating in the Form of Body, “and brings it to the point of not being a body at all...” (609c4–6). This provides a metaphysical basis for a common sense intuition, that what makes something stop being the thing it is — that is, what destroys it — is bad for that thing.

This argument treats the question of the soul’s immortality as equivalent to asking whether there is anything capable of causing an individual soul to stop participating in the Form of Soul. Socrates has an argument that the most likely candidate for doing this, vice, in fact cannot do it, and this justifies the conclusion that nothing else can either. One of the argument’s key claims is that each kind

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<sup>99</sup>Some authors, looking for the explanation of this claim, point to earlier discussions of function in the *Republic*: Brown (1997, p. 307), Cornford (1941, p. 341). But these passages (353b ff., 601d) provide no metaphysical justification for the claim that each thing has a single virtue and vice.

<sup>100</sup>Or relations among immanent forms — we do not need to decide between the two here.

<sup>101</sup>I argued in the previous section that readings that avoid attributing this schema to Socrates are significantly weaker than those that accept it.

of thing has a specific evil, and each form of evil is bad for a specific kind of thing. So the Form of Ophthalmia can only destroy things occupied by the Form of Eye, never things occupied by the Form of Nose. If a bad thing does enter some individual not occupied by the Form of the entity for which the bad thing is bad, it will not cause that individual to cease participating in the Form of whatever it is. Socrates' claim seems to come to this, that (1) for each thing, its identity as that kind of thing is guaranteed by its participation in its eponymous Form, and (2) the (immanent) form of each thing has a contrary whose "attack" is capable of forcing it to "retreat" or "perish." The first claim is just the "safe" answer of the *Phaedo*'s final argument; the second builds on its "sophisticated" answer.

The argument is therefore best understood as making its point via a Form of Soul. For, like the final argument of the *Phaedo*, this argument depends on establishing relations of contrariety among Forms, and in particular among immanent Forms. If none of the Forms that are the specific evils for a given kind of thing can succeed in driving out the eponymous that Form makes the thing what it is, the thing must be indestructible. The question whether the soul is indestructible can be recast, then, as the question whether anything can cause an individual soul to stop participating in the Form of Soul. Socrates' answer is that the best candidate for this, injustice, cannot cause this. Since observation shows that the approach and entry of the immanent Form of the soul's own evil, injustice, does not cause the immanent Form of the Soul to depart, Socrates concludes that, *a fortiori*, nothing else can cause the immanent Form of Soul to depart either. The individual soul, which is what it is in virtue of being occupied by this immanent Form, is therefore

indestructible.<sup>102</sup>

## 1.7 The Influence of the Form of Soul

Since there is a transcendent Form of Soul in the background of these two dialogues, it is natural that its presence should make itself felt in Plato's characterization of individual souls, which are what they are in virtue of their participation in this Form. Both the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* claim that the better a soul's condition is, the less it changes. Change is a sign of something wrong in a soul, stability a sign of health.

Socrates claims that visible things change constantly (*Phaedo* 78e), and that when human souls associate with such things, they are themselves the victims of increasing levels of change.<sup>103</sup> This is bad for them. They are "dragged by the body to the things that are never the same, and the soul itself strays and is confused and dizzy as if it were drunk, insofar as it is in contact with that kind of thing" (65b, 79c6–8).<sup>104</sup> By contrast, an individual soul that separates itself as much as possible from the body in order to contemplate the Forms associates with things that never

<sup>102</sup>The suggestion that the Book X argument takes over the logic of the *Phaedo*'s final argument is not new. Several commentators have made the same proposal in a less detailed way, e.g., Leroux (2002, pp. 721–722).

<sup>103</sup>On 78e Archer-Hind remarks, "This is one of many passages which show that Plato thoroughly accepted the doctrines of Herakleitos and Protagoras so far as regards the material world." There seems to be no disagreement on the import of the passage: Rowe (1993, p. 184), Gallop (1975, p. 139), Bluck (1954, p. 73), Burnet (1911, pp. 77–78), Archer-Hind (1894, p. 48).

<sup>104</sup>Some note the weakness of Socrates' argument at 65b, but what matters for my argument is that Socrates (as well as Simmias) seems to believe its conclusion, whether on good grounds or not. My argument might even be somewhat stronger to the extent that the justification given in the text is weak, for this is reason to look elsewhere for the justification Plato had for making his characters accept the claim. See Ebert (2004, p. 134 and n. 12), Rowe (1993, pp. 139–140), Bostock (1986, p. 26), Gallop (1975, p. 91).

change, and this is good for it (79d, 80d–81a).

Socrates' imperturbability in the face of his own death, given special emphasis at the opening and the end of the dialogue (58e, 117b), illustrates how good a soul can be if it successfully resists change.<sup>105</sup> One indication of this resistance comes when Crito asks Socrates for instructions about how his friends are to look after his interests. The response is, "Nothing new" (οὐδὲν καινότερον, 115b5). Just afterward, Socrates reminds Crito that he is his soul, not his body. The lesson is that Socrates' excellence is to be traced largely to the constancy of his soul (115b–c). By contrast, the friends who are present are subject to strong emotions, with Apollodorus singled out as especially upset, i.e. unstable.

The *Republic* likewise claims that better souls will be less affected by change, and adds the general claim that "the best things are least liable to alteration or change..." (380e3–4, 381a3–4).<sup>106</sup> When he turns to the education of the guardians, Socrates recommends simplicity rather than complexity in both their physical and their intellectual training (404d–e).<sup>107</sup> And since the realm of the bodily is the realm of change, when the soul does anything "by itself" it is *ipso facto* less subject to change. So Socrates observes that learning involves "the pleasures that the soul experiences just by itself," and ascribes virtues to souls that are like this (485d–e). In the analogy of the Sun, Socrates claims that souls possess knowledge when they focus on something that really is, i.e. something that does not change;

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<sup>105</sup>On 58e, see Ebert (2004, p. 108). Commentators generally recognize this theme at the end of the dialogue, for example Ebert (2004, p. 458). Many commentators say nothing about the final pages, either because of their lesser philosophical interest or, like Hackforth, because they prefer to let Plato's moving text speak for itself.

<sup>106</sup>Noted as a general principle of Platonic metaphysics by Leroux (2002, p. 566 n. 122) and White (1979, p. 93).

<sup>107</sup>Noted by Moss (2007, p. 436).

when souls focus on things that change, they are “dimmed” and have no understanding (ἀμβλύνεται, 508d7).<sup>108</sup> Later in the discussion of the philosopher-rulers Socrates mentions the need to draw their souls from becoming to being (525c) — that is, from changing things to changeless ones — and this what justifies the study of geometry (526e, 527b).<sup>109</sup>

The *Phaedo* and the *Republic* also share the claim that the gods do not change. This is further evidence of the influence of the Form of Soul, since the gods are presumably nothing but souls.<sup>110</sup> The *Republic* argues that “whatever is in good condition...is least subject to change by something else” (380c–381c).<sup>111</sup> Nor can the gods change themselves, since the only change possible for them would be to some worse condition. The *Phaedo* also claims, less directly, that the gods do not change.<sup>112</sup> Socrates associates souls with the divine, and both terms with the predicate “deathless” (80b1–3). He later claims that “the god...and anything that is deathless, are never destroyed” (106d5–7 ).<sup>113</sup> If something is never destroyed, then it must be unchangeable too, for change is the beginning of the destruction.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>108</sup>Noted by Leroux (2002, p. 670 n. 138).

<sup>109</sup>Crombie, however, thinks “It is not very clear precisely why mathematical studies are given such importance”: Crombie (1962, p. 132). The motivation of drawing one’s attention “from the world of change to reality” (Cross and Woosley) is noted by Kamtekar (2008, p. 354), O’Connor (2007, p. 75), Denyer (2007, p. 303), Miller (2007, pp. 323–324), Leroux (2002, p. 683 n. 59).

<sup>110</sup>A simple argument for this claim: Plato’s ontology recognizes bodies, Forms, and souls (at the most); the gods have no bodies; the gods are not Forms; so there is nothing else they can be but souls.

<sup>111</sup>Noted by Kamtekar (2008, p. 349), O’Connor (2007, p. 81), Moss (2007, p. 436 including nn. 31–32), Leroux (2002, p. 565 nn. 121, 124, 125).

<sup>112</sup>Gallop goes further, claiming that “the Form world is virtually identified with the gods...” Gallop (1975, p. 141).

<sup>113</sup>Bostock (1986, pp. 191–192) denies that this claim is meant as an argument. But this does not affect my point; the claim is one to which Socrates subscribes, so it can be combined with others to which he subscribes to reveal more about his views.

<sup>114</sup>Rickless separates two senses of “changelessness”: (1) something may never go in or out of

These claims pervade the *Phaedo* and *Republic*. Their presence does not, of course, prove that Plato had a Form of Soul in mind; I hope my earlier arguments have already accomplished that. But the Form of Soul is consistent with, and may be the best explanation for, Plato's firm commitment to these claims; its ability to explain, even if in a loose sense, some of Plato's most important commitments counts in favor of recognizing the influence of the Form of Soul. By recognizing the Form of Soul we are in a better position to explain some central and persistent claims in these two dialogues.

## 1.8 Why is Plato Silent about the Form of Soul?

It makes good sense to ask what the soul essentially is, or what its reality is, but Plato gives no clear answer to this question in the *Phaedo* or *Republic*.<sup>115</sup> We cannot know why Plato was silent about this question, but silence on a topic so central to his interests should attract our interest. In this section I consider some explanations for Plato's silence on this point.

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existence, or (2) it may be always in the same state. He comments, "It is not as clear why Plato accepts the...proposition that forms are changeless along the former dimension, i.e. insofar as they neither come into nor go out of existence." (Rickless 2007, p. 42). But it seems clear that, whether or not he had good reason for doing so, Plato thought the second kind of changelessness was a necessary condition for the first. *Phaedo* 80b provides evidence for this: divine things are uniform and always the same as well as immortal, while visible things have the opposite qualities. It is easy to infer that these lists of qualities are not assembled at random; remaining in the same state provides a kind of immunity to going out of existence.

<sup>115</sup>Dorothea Frede notes this lacuna as well: "As to the exact nature of the soul we are left somehow in the dark by Plato in the *Phaedo* and also in *Republic* X." (Frede 1978, p. 293) Note that tripartition does not address the question I have in mind. Tripartition concerns the *internal* structure of souls; I am asking about its metaphysical features, that is, the properties making it the kind of thing it is. This is why knowing whether there is a Form of Soul is relevant to this inquiry, in a way that knowing whether souls are tripartite is not: nothing can be said to exist, or to be immortal, in virtue of being tripartite. But participating in the Form of Soul, and therefore in the Form of Life, may be relevant to why souls exist, or whether they are immortal.



The fact that Plato does not say explicitly that there is a Form of Soul in his metaphysics does not give us a strong reason to conclude that it is not there: the Form of Soul is too obvious a possibility to think that Plato never entertained the idea. So if we think that he entertained the idea and rejected it, we then have to ask why he is silent about the rejection. If Plato wanted to avoid affirming the Form of Soul, he had ample opportunity to insert a remark or a claim that would have ruled it out *somewhere* in the text of either dialogue. But he did not do this any more than he explicitly mentioned it. Would-be deniers of the Form of Soul thus have a problem to solve: why, if Plato did not accept the Form of Soul at this period, is he silent about his denial? Likewise, my position has the problem of explaining why, if Plato accepted the Form of Soul, he is silent about this. The silence itself tells us nothing, because the question is obvious, whichever answer Plato favored.

Moravcsik offers an interesting general explanation for the lacuna: he divides ontologies into those whose primary contrast is real versus unreal and those whose main contrast is real versus appearance. Plato's is one of the latter, and therefore "we must not expect to find a metaphysical cage for every creature that was construed in Plato's time or our own as real."<sup>116</sup> Even if this claim is true in general, it is hard to accept the suggestion that Plato omitted to pronounce on the case of the soul because he did not intend to be exhaustive. The soul is not a detail in Plato's thought, but one of the main interests, and of course the same is true of the Forms. Second, at *Phaedo* 79a ff., Socrates proposes a division of entities into visible and invisible. This division must be exhaustive, or Socrates would not be

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<sup>116</sup>Moravcsik (2000, p. 56)

able, as he does, to draw any conclusion about the soul from it. So on this point, in this context, Moravcsik's thesis is not helpful: some of Plato's divisions are meant to convey information about his ontology, and some of these also provide a "metaphysical cage" for every inhabitant.

Another explanation for Plato's silence about the nature of the soul is that the gap could only be filled by a definition, and Plato does not at this point know any definition of the soul that he accepts. But this is also the case for Beauty and Goodness: he nowhere endorses definitions of these terms, but he does not hesitate to speak of Forms for them. We are to understand that the Form of Beauty is what beauty essentially is; Plato may not know how to fill in the definition that specifies this (or he may be cagey about revealing it for some other reason), but whatever the definition may be, that is what the Form of Beauty is.<sup>117</sup> He could easily have made the same move regarding the soul, but does not. So this explanation is implausible.

Three French writers have agreed that Plato's silence on the Form of Soul must be intentional.<sup>118</sup> For example, Loriaux writes:

...nous avons d'abord la conviction que, si le *Phédon* ne dit nulle part que l'âme est une Forme, c'est parce qu'il n'a jamais eu l'intention de le faire. La prudence dont Platon fait preuve en ce domaine — en particulier, dans des textes où une affirmation plus massive aurait pu sembler plus payante — nous paraît, sur ce point, tout à fait significative...<sup>119</sup>

Unfortunately, he does not go on to say precisely what conclusion should be drawn from the silence. This passage suffers from an ambiguity common to many au-

<sup>117</sup>Silverman discusses this feature of Plato's thought at Silverman (2002, p. 7).

<sup>118</sup>Dixsaut (1991, p. 397 n. 321), Loriaux (1975, p. 132), Guérault (1926, p. 488).

<sup>119</sup>Loriaux (1975, p. 132)

thors who touch on this subject. It is not clear whether Loriaux is discussing what kind of thing an individual soul is or whether or not a Form of Soul is included in Plato's metaphysics: "l'âme est une Forme" is ambiguous between these two interpretations, as is the English, "the soul is a Form." The text continues by discussing what kind of thing individual souls are, so this suggests that it is this question that Loriaux has in view here as well, and not whether or not there is a Form of Soul.<sup>120</sup>

The situation in the scholarly literature, then, is almost as striking as the one in Plato's texts: near silence about Plato's silence about the nature of the soul and about the Form of Soul, with those authors who do recognize the silence not attempting to probe it very far. While we cannot show that a particular explanation is correct, we may still gain some insight into the possibilities. We can start by dividing explanations of this puzzle into two groups. The first group proposes that Plato is silent because he intends to avoid committing himself to the Form of Soul. To fill in the members of the group, consider two variables. First, the kind of *intention* we attribute to Plato might vary, from thinking Plato was *hesitant* to affirm the Form of Soul to thinking he positively meant to *deny* or *avoid* it altogether. Second, one can imagine various *reasons* for whatever intention he had: he might have considered the Form of Soul a metaphysical monstrosity, or he might have seen problems with it but hoped he would be able to solve them. The plausible combinations of these two variables compose the class of explanations of the first type. These explanations all suppose that Plato saw some metaphysical or logical difficulty with the Form of Soul. We may be sympathetic to this kind of explanation because we also find this Form metaphysically untenable. But this sympathy

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<sup>120</sup>Dixsaut (1991, p. 397 n. 321) at some points does seem to address the question whether there is a Form of Soul; see page 64 above.

should not cause us to overlook some difficulties with this whole class of explanations.

First, Plato is silent not just about the Form of Soul but also about the precise nature of the individual soul. Supposing that Plato saw problems with the Form of Soul does not explain why he should also be silent about the definition or nature of the individual soul, unless we also assume that he could not see how to discuss the latter without the former. Second, the supposition that Plato held some negative attitude toward the Form of Soul is not in harmony with the many passages noted above in which he writes as if there is no limit on the range of Forms. To suppose that he wrote these passages while at the same time thinking the Form of Soul was untenable is to come close to thinking that Plato wrote these sections of the *Phaedo* and *Republic* with his tongue in his cheek. Whatever we make of the metaphysics we find in these dialogues, it hardly seems plausible that their author did not find their central ideas worth taking seriously. But that is what this kind of explanation comes close to affirming.

Given these difficulties, it is important to realize that another kind of explanation is available for Plato's silence on both these topics: perhaps Plato had some reason other than a negative attitude toward the Form of Soul for keeping silent about it.

Plato's silence may be, at least in part, a dramatic strategy to heighten interest in the theory by leaving out of view the key concept that connects the two major themes of the dialogue. From a dramatic point of view, silence on an important point creates interest and tension. Plato often uses this technique on a small scale. Consider, for example:

Socrates: Consider, then, what I am about to say. Glaucon: Say it.  
(*Republic* 436c4–5)

Or this:

Socrates: ...But you, I imagine, will agree to the following. Glaucon:  
What? (*Republic* 475e6–8)

Readers will recognize this pattern as one that Plato uses regularly: drawing attention to some point as if it has already been enunciated when in fact it has not. Plato may be doing this on a larger scale with the Form of Soul. In the examples just given, one function of these questions is clear: they add a small touch of dramatic propulsion, and reduce repetition and flatness in Socrates' exposition. Their effect is local: tension is created and immediately resolved when Socrates goes on to spell out what he has just alluded to. Now if Plato is carrying out the same strategy on a larger scale, it will be effective to draw attention to a thought, or to the territory near a problem, without ever resolving the tension by spelling it out. I suggest that this strategy, on a large scale, may be one of the elements that creates interest in the *Phaedo* and *Republic*. That is, these dialogues are centrally concerned with two theories whose intersection is never taken up directly. Writers often attribute to Plato's dialogues the intention of encouraging or provoking readers to improve on the arguments in the texts, and generally of motivating them to philosophize. The suggestion that the Form of Soul is missing from the text intentionally would be another way of carrying out this intention.

## 1.9 What is an Individual Soul?

Although Plato does not give a definition of individual souls in either the *Phaedo* or the *Republic*, his statements allow us to reconstruct a rough theory of souls for these dialogues.<sup>121</sup> The theory gives individual souls a unique metaphysical slot: they are both invisible, making them resemble the Forms, but also individual particulars, making them subject to change like the items in the visible world.

I begin with an elimination argument, to the effect that the individual soul does not fit into any of Plato's categories except that of invisible individuals.<sup>122</sup> Individual souls cannot be numerically identical with the transcendent Form of Soul, since this would leave Socrates with no need to prove the immortality of individual souls: immortality would follow immediately from being a Form. Individual souls cannot be immanent forms either, for immanent forms exist only in virtue of "being in" some individual item. The Tallness in Simmias ceases to exist if it "retreats" out of him. Likewise, if my soul is nothing but an immanent instance of the Form of Soul, then there is no reason to think that my soul is able to go on existing when it is no longer within me. Since I am a combination of my soul and body, if my soul *qua* immanent form withdraws from the combination, it will cease to be anything on its own.<sup>123</sup> Perhaps it is re-absorbed into the transcendent Form of Soul, or it may just disappear. However this part of the story would go, Plato has said nothing to make us suppose that the soul *qua* immanent form

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<sup>121</sup> By comparison, Socrates searches for definitions in several Platonic dialogues; he gives a definition of color at *Meno* 75b10–1; he defines soul at *Phaedrus* 245e.

<sup>122</sup> Throughout this argument I will assume that individual souls would fit into one, and *only one*, of the categories to be discussed. It would also be possible to maintain that the individual soul occupies more than one of these categories, but I shall ignore these complications.

<sup>123</sup> The claim that a person is a combination of soul and body is found at *Phaedo* 79b1–2.

can exist on its own.<sup>124</sup> If the soul can exist by itself, then *ipso facto* it must be a substance-like thing rather than just an immanent form. Finally, individual souls are not identical with any member of the visible realm, since Socrates explicitly argues that souls are invisible (*Phaedo* 79b7–15). There are no other metaphysical slots that the individual soul might occupy, so it must be an individual, but a member of the invisible realm: an invisible individual.<sup>125</sup>

This is still a rather unfocused picture of what individual souls are. I now turn to examine the pair of distinctions that carve out the soul's metaphysical niche more closely, to try to discern what each contributes to the properties of the soul. I take up the visible/invisible distinction first.

*Phaedo* 79a–80b makes central use of the visible/invisible distinction, and at least initially treats it as fundamental and exhaustive.<sup>126</sup> When Socrates asks, “Do you want us to assume two kinds of existences, the visible and the invisible?” (79a6–7), he is dividing everything real into two classes. That the distinction is exhaustive is shown by his subsequently asking Cebes whether the soul is visible or invisible (79b7, b12): there is no possibility of a third answer. Cebes hesitates, but Socrates puts him back on the track by pointing out that he means nothing

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<sup>124</sup>I argued above that no immanent form can exist without a corresponding transcendent Form; here I am adding the claim that no immanent form can exist without a “host” particular in which it is located.

<sup>125</sup>Fine endorses this view of individual souls, although without giving her grounds for it: Fine (1993, p. 249 n. 27). There might be another slot to eliminate, namely the Form of the Good, since it is said to be “beyond being” (*Republic* 509b7–9), and this status might make it a special case that cannot be lumped together with the other Forms. But this is obviously not a candidate for the nature of the individual soul either; any of the Forms is automatically immortal, so the argument given above applies to all such cases. Nor can I see what claiming that the individual soul is identical with the Form of the Good would mean. It is clear that Plato would not countenance this claim.

<sup>126</sup>We will see below that there is more than one way of taking this claim, and Plato hesitates to endorse the stronger of the two he uses.

more sophisticated than “visible and invisible to human eyes.”<sup>127</sup> Thus, Socrates is using the ordinary sense of these terms, in which any given entity must be either visible or invisible.<sup>128</sup>

Invisibility is associated with being unchangeable in this passage. Socrates amplifies this association at some length (78c10–d7), then asks: “...those that always remain the same can be grasped only by the reasoning power of the mind? They are not seen but are invisible?” (79a2–4) Socrates does not claim (1) everything invisible is unchanging, but only (2) everything unchanging is invisible. This claim is compatible with saying that the soul is invisible but also able to change. Socrates does, however, imply that invisibility contributes to, or is somehow associated with the soul’s ability to resist change, in a long speech emphasizing the constancy of the Forms along with their invisibility.<sup>129</sup> The preeminent characteristic of invisible things in this section is their immunity to change, so the soul’s ability to resist change must somehow be due to its invisibility.

We find more evidence that Socrates does not endorse (1), the claim that everything invisible is unchanging, in his handling of Cebes’ answer to his questions.

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<sup>127</sup>Ebert suggests that Cebes wants to avoid saying the soul is invisible because he realizes that, combined with what he has already agreed to, this will allow him to be trapped in a contradiction by Socrates: Ebert (2004, p. 260).

<sup>128</sup>One could add qualifications to this disjunction: any entity must be either visible or invisible at a given time, to a given observer, from a given point, using his eyes or other specified equipment, etc. But this would not change the basic point Socrates is making.

<sup>129</sup>Rickless (2007, p. 43) also recognizes this association. Plato is consistent in associating the invisible with immunity to change throughout these two dialogues, except once in the *Republic* where he seems to mention motion among the Forms: “But these [sc. motions in the visible heavens] fall far short of the true ones — those motions in which the things that are really fast or really slow, as measured in true numbers and as forming all the true geometrical figures, are moved relative to one another, and that move the things that are in them. And these, of course, must be grasped by reason and thought, not by sight” (*Republic* 529d1–5). Perhaps there is a reading on which these are not actual motions among the Forms: either the motion might take place somewhere other than among the Forms (the numbers, for example), or the motion itself might be hypothesized or merely extrapolated from changeless facts about the Forms.



Socrates has asked Cebes whether the soul is visible or invisible, and has had to prod Cebes to say the soul is invisible by telling him that he means nothing but visible or invisible to human eyes (79b7–14).<sup>130</sup> But when Cebes responds to the prompt by saying that the soul is invisible (79b14–15), Socrates immediately softens his answer to something that avoids commitment to the plain form of (1): “So the soul is *more like* the invisible than the body, and the body *more like* the visible” (79b16–17). Since he has been using the distinction in its exhaustive sense up to this point, the qualification “more like” must signal that Socrates is shifting to a second sense of “visible” and “invisible.” In this second sense, “visible” seems to entail that something is always changing, and “invisible” that something never changes.<sup>131</sup>

This new sense is no longer exhaustive: *prima facie* there is room for things that change a great deal at some times or in some ways, but very little at other times or in other ways. And this is precisely what Socrates says about the soul in the same passage: when it follows the body “the soul itself strays and is confused

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<sup>130</sup>Various views have been taken of this passage. Burnet says of this exchange: “The inference from ‘not visible’ to ‘invisible’ seemed more necessary to the Greeks than to us.” (Burnet 1911, p. 68 ad 79b13) Archer-Hind more sensibly suggests that Plato has Socrates go step by step from *ἀόρατον* to *ἀειδὲς* in order to stress the connection with *Ἄϊδης*. (Archer-Hind 1894, p. 49) Rowe suggests that Cebes’ hesitation represents the traditional and Homeric view of the dead, according to which disembodied souls were thought to be visible, although not to the living (Rowe 1993, p. 185). Loriaux also rejects Burnet’s suggestion, and instead proposes that Socrates is trying to ease the path for Cebes’ assent to his argument “par substituer au terme un peu mystérieux et inquiétant de *ἀϊδης* ces mots plus simples que sont *οὐχ ὁρατά*.” (Loriaux 1969, pp. 168–169) Bostock’s explanation is that “while Plato evidently believes that the soul is...immaterial, he would not be entitled to expect general agreement on that point,” citing Democritus as a contemporary view on which souls are material but invisible: Bostock (1986, pp. 118–119).

<sup>131</sup>Ebert points out that Socrates first asks Cebes (79b4–5) to which class the body is more similar: “Das ist angesichts des bisherigen Duktus der Argumentation eine ziemlich erstaunliche Frage.” (Ebert 2004, p. 259) I suggest that Plato uses this form of question for the body before he has Socrates use it for the soul in order to treat the two cases in parallel, thus making the shift in treatment of the soul less salient.

and dizzy, as if it were drunk, insofar as it is in contact with that kind of thing” (79c7–8). On the other hand, when the soul investigates the Forms “it ceases to stray and remains in the same state as it is in touch with things of the same kind...” (79d5–6).<sup>132</sup> Socrates’ hesitation to say that the soul is invisible *tout court* can be explained by the two senses of “invisible” in play here. In the ordinary sense, souls are straightforwardly invisible because we cannot see them; in the second sense, invisible things are changeless, and souls are only *like* the invisible.<sup>133</sup>

The hedging in the text is a clear sign that Plato did not intend to call individual souls unchanging without qualification.<sup>134</sup> This affirmation that individual

<sup>132</sup>Gallop points out that this claim rests on the tacit Empedoclean assumption that “like knows like,” and also notes that the passage describing the soul as dizzy and drunk shows beyond doubt that it changes. He further suggests two reasons the soul must be subject to change: (1) if it is subject to incarnation, then it must be in a body at one time and not in it at another; (2) if it partakes of the Form of Life, “and if life entails change, then soul must be subject to change.” (Gallop 1975, pp. 140–141) Rowe and Ebert also conclude from this passage that the soul is subject to change: Ebert (2004, p. 258), Rowe (1993, p. 185).

<sup>133</sup>Hackforth’s reading begins with a single sense of “invisible,” so he justly wonders, “If it is invisible, what sense is there in saying that it is more like what is invisible than body is?” He modifies his position, however, when he comes to consider a slightly later part of the text, and reaches a conclusion very similar to what I advocate here. “What is the reason for the disappointing limitation expressed in the words ‘or nearly so’ [80b11]? It lies, I think, in the ambiguity of τὸ ἀδῆς. If understood as the whole class of things invisible, this will, or may, include other members besides Forms, and the dichotomy of 79a6 certainly leads us to believe that Plato at least begins by giving it this sense; yet if that is so, he almost immediately narrows the meaning so as to include nothing but Forms, and the question becomes not ‘which of the two orders of things does the soul belong to?’ but ‘which of two kinds of things, Forms or sensibles, does soul resemble, and which does body?’ Thenceforward the vague notion of likeness replaces the notion of membership of an order, all members of which have certain attributes; and Plato recognises in the end that, just because ‘likeness’ is a vague notion, his argument can at most establish approximate indissolubility of the soul.” (Hackforth 1955, pp. 85–86) Bostock has a similar view in (1986, p. 118).

<sup>134</sup>See Ebert (2004, pp. 257–258). Gallop concurs: “This [talk of ‘the seen’ and ‘the unseen’] is best taken as referring to the Forms and the sensible world as such, rather than as asserting, quite generally, that whatever is unseen is constant, and whatever is seen is inconstant.” (Gallop 1975, p. 140) Hackforth initially takes Socrates to be claiming that the individual soul is changeless, without explaining how this could be squared with observed experience (1955, p. 84). Bostock begins with the common sense observation that souls change, then writes: “Indeed one wonders why Plato dared to make this comparison [between the soul and the Forms on one hand, the body on the other] at all, for it is obvious that the soul is a changing thing, and in this respect is like the body and not like the forms.” (Bostock 1986, p. 119)

souls change is echoed in the *Republic*, where Socrates describes the philosopher who “looks at and contemplates things that are orderly and always the same...he imitates them and tries to become as like them as he can” (500c3–6).<sup>135</sup> Imitation implies, of course, that the imitator is not already just like the thing imitated.<sup>136</sup>

Had he asserted that individual souls do not change, Plato would have severed the link between what we are phenomenally aware of as our own minds and his theory of the soul. He would have been claiming that some important part of us does not change, but this claim would have seemed unimportant to many in his audience, since it would not correspond to anything they were aware of directly.<sup>137</sup> By allowing that individual souls do change, Plato can maintain that he is talking about souls in the same sense in which people take themselves to be directly aware of their own souls, meaning their internal experiences or their own minds. So to say that souls are invisible individuals is not to claim that they are changeless. Instead, the claim is that souls have the capacity to resist or escape change.<sup>138</sup>

Casual reading of the *Phaedo* and *Republic* may produce the impression that

<sup>135</sup>Leroux notes the similarity of this passage to *Phaedo* 79c–d *inter alia* (2002, p. 664 n. 93). White thinks the desire to imitate the Forms is a basic feature of Plato’s psychology, not derived from any other feature (1979, p. 173).

<sup>136</sup>Another possible reading: the philosopher’s soul is already changeless, and what the philosopher is imitating is some other characteristic of the Forms. Or one might think that Plato is using “imitate” (μιμεῖσθαι, 500c6) in an unusual way, such that one can be just like something, but “imitate” it by intentionally remaining in the same state as what one is imitating. These readings are strained, however, and would require some compelling argument before claiming more of our attention. The natural sense is that the philosopher is trying to become more changeless, since that is the property of the Forms mentioned in the text.

<sup>137</sup>Thus Robinson: “There [sc. in the *Phaedo*] the soul had been assimilated to the Ideas, and the hiatus between the unmoving Intelligible World and that of sensible things subject to motion had meant an inadequate explanation of the soul as we experience it in the world of movement...the elementary attribute of all living things, movement, was quietly shelved, and the static, homogeneous, unchanging entity whose immortality he was left to prove was recognizable only to himself.” (Robinson 1995a, p. 114)

<sup>138</sup>Bluck writes, “...hence, it is implied, there is at least some *prima facie* ground for supposing that [the soul] may be invariable.” (Bluck 1954, p. 74)

Plato advances claim (1) frequently, since he often mentions “the invisible”, and typically associates it with lack of change. In fact, however, these passages avoid claiming that everything invisible is changeless. They rather claim that those things that are changeless (or the things that really are, a synonymous expression) are invisible. I briefly consider three such passages.

Socrates describes how philosophy encourages souls to leave the physical behind in the *Phaedo* at 82d9–83c3. Here, too, he makes much of the claim that everything visible is changing, and thus implies that what is invisible does not change. But the closest he comes to saying simply that everything invisible is changeless is the following. “[F]or [what can be sensed] is different in different circumstances and is sensible and visible, whereas what the soul itself sees is intelligible and invisible” (83b1–4). Although this statement implies that what is intelligible and invisible does not change, this is said about “what the soul itself sees,” and so is most naturally taken to exclude souls themselves. This passage thus leaves it open that individual souls may change.<sup>139</sup>

In the famous Line passage in the *Republic*, Socrates gives the following account of knowledge and belief:

When [the soul] focuses on something that is illuminated both by truth and what is, it understands, knows, and manifestly possesses understanding. But when it focuses on what is mixed with obscurity, on what comes to be and passes away, it believes and is dimmed, changes its beliefs this way and that, and seems bereft of understanding. (*Republic* 508d3–8)

<sup>139</sup>Loriaux agrees that this passage does not claim that everything invisible is unchanging: “...il est vrai que Platon a dit plus d’une fois que ce qui est αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτό est aussi ἀεὶ ὡσαύτως ἔχον (cf. 78 c et suiv.), mais il n’est pas prouvé que les deux expressions signifient formellement la même chose...” (Loriaux 1969, p. 183)

It is easy to see that here there is no claim that everything that really is, or everything that is invisible, is changeless. This passage leaves no doubt that individual souls are capable of changing, of course, since it describes souls changing from knowledge to belief. The passage claims only that what the soul focuses on, if it is something real, is changeless. It says nothing directly about whether the soul is changeless, and implies that it is not.

Finally, here is one more passage that might leave the impression Plato is saying that everything invisible is changeless. Socrates criticizes astronomy because it studies changing things. Reeve translates: “I just cannot conceive of any subject making the soul look upward except the one that is concerned with what is — and that is *invisible*.”<sup>140</sup> As before, a moment’s attention shows there is no claim here that *everything* invisible is changeless, only that what is changeless is invisible. These three selections seem the ones most likely to leave the mistaken impression. Plato mentions what is invisible or what is changeless in many other places, but I have found no passage in which he endorses the view that everything invisible is changeless. This is strong, if indirect evidence that Plato thought it an important fact about the soul that it is invisible but also subject to change. Since his main examples of invisible things are the Forms, and they do not change, the fact that he avoids claiming that everything invisible is changeless suggests that he was leaving room for the individual soul.

But even if this picture so far is correct, there is something unsatisfactory about classifying the soul this way. For Plato must be aware he is playing with two distinct senses of the visible/invisible distinction. On the first sense souls are

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<sup>140</sup> ἔγω γὰρ αὐτὸ οὐ δύναμαι ἄλλο τι νομίσαι ἄνω ποιοῦν ψυχὴν βλέπειν μάθημα ἢ ἐκεῖνο ὃ ἂν περὶ τὸ ὄν τε ἢ καὶ τὸ ἀόρατον..., *Republic* 529b3–5.

straightforwardly invisible. On the second sense, they are merely like the invisible, and this leaves it unclear how their membership in that category helps make them less changeable, and to what extent it does so. Not surprisingly, then, Plato seems to try out a different kind of answer in the *Republic*, especially at 611b–612a. (As we have seen, many passages in the *Republic* continue to assert that reality is invisible and changeless, but there is less emphasis on the soul's invisibility.) Here Socrates suggests that in spite of his earlier argument that the soul has three parts, we should not conclude on this basis that this is what the soul is like “in its truest nature” (τῇ ἀληθεστάτῃ φύσει). He then compares the soul to

...the sea god Glaucus, whose original nature cannot easily be made out by those who catch glimpses of him, because some of the original parts of his body have been broken off, others have been worn away and altogether mutilated by the waves, and other things — shells, seaweeds, and rocks — have grown into him, so that he looks more like any wild beast than what he naturally was. Such, too, is the condition of the soul when we see it beset by myriad bad things. (611c6–d6)

The “myriad bad things” must refer to the changing physical world that our souls find themselves involved in. I argued earlier that this phrase, “τῇ ἀληθεστάτῃ φύσει,” implies that there is a Form of Soul, since Plato's only explanation for how something can have a “truest nature” at all is that there is a Form of it. The passage, however, is not directly about the Form of Soul, since it describes the soul as undergoing many changes by analogizing it to Glaucus who undergoes many changes. The passage is therefore about individual souls. Nevertheless, when it refers to what the soul is like “in its truest nature,” we should take this as an allusion both to (1) what the Form of Soul is like, and (2) what an individual soul is like

when it most successfully imitates the Form of Soul, and is thus most like what it really is.

In this passage Plato is pushing toward the answer that the real soul is changeless *tout court*, and so is not like the self-awareness we have of our own minds.<sup>141</sup> We are aware of our minds as changing, whereas Plato suggests here, somewhat tentatively, that our real selves/souls never change. Perhaps his reason for trying this explanation is that the one we have just examined fails to tell us anything very specific about the soul. This solution would have the virtue of being definite and of associating souls firmly with the Forms; it comes with the cost of severing the tie between the phenomenal self and the soul Plato says is immortal. On this view, it may be hard to see why we should care that the soul is immortal, since it may have nothing in common with anything we are aware of.<sup>142</sup>

This view is not confined to the passage just cited. Earlier in the *Republic* Socrates speaks of the soul as if it is only properly identified with its rational part. Here Socrates' statement implies that the appetitive part is not really part of the soul:

Then when a person's desires flow toward learning and everything of that sort, they will be concerned, I imagine, with the pleasures that

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<sup>141</sup>Adam takes a similar view: "According to the theory which is rather suggested (612a) than fully worked out in this chapter, the so-called lower 'parts' are not of the essence of soul at all, but only incidental to its association with body, and consequently perishable...Plato expresses himself with great reserve (612a), but apparently intends us to believe that soul in its truest nature is λογιστικόν, and that the λογιστικόν alone is immortal." (Adam 1921, Volume II p. 427); in agreement with Adam is Leroux (2002, p. 722 n. 40). Other authors treat this passage as ambiguous, as failing to say whether the whole soul is a unity and immortal or if some part(s) only are everlasting: Lorenz (2008, pp. 253–254), Waterfield (1993, pp. 451–452), Robinson (1967), Cross and Woosley (1964, p. 288), Crombie (1962, pp. 152–153).

<sup>142</sup>Of course, Plato might respond that this depends on how philosophical we have managed to become.

the soul experiences *just by itself* (αὐτῆς καθ' αὐτήν), and will be indifferent to those that come *through the body* (διὰ τοῦ σώματος)...(485d10–12)

Socrates has just shown that the soul has three parts, so in this passage he must mean that the appetitive part, the one that is sensitive to the pleasures of the body, is not part of the soul insofar as the soul exists “just by itself.” This passage agrees with Socrates’ suggestion in Book X that the real soul is only its rational part, and that part is changeless.

This second answer seems to say that changes are only apparent, and do not pertain to the soul’s true nature. He has provided himself with the resources to make the following argument, although we do not find it laid out as such in the text. Since change is a property of visible things, Plato could claim that all the alleged changes to which souls are subject come via visible, physical things. That is, souls change their opinions, memories, preferences, etc. because of the influence bodies have on them. I come to believe that I must eat soon because my body is hungry; without my body I would presumably be immune this kind of change. Socrates has already made a similar claim earlier in the *Republic*, to the effect that each of the Forms is only one, but “because they appear all over the place in partnership with actions and bodies, and with one another, each of them appears to be many things” (476a6–8). If this is his explanation for the various appearances of the Forms, it is reasonable to suppose he would endorse the same explanation for souls.

Plato could account for many kinds of change with this analysis. But some types of change might resist it: my opinions about mathematical questions, for example, might have no direct relation to any body or set of bodies, since on Plato’s



view these questions are about invisible, changeless entities. But he might appeal to his doctrine of anamnesis in these cases, to claim that our false opinions on these subjects are again due to our involvement with the body. Remove the body in question, and we would have a soul as it was prior to entering a body, when it remembered all it had seen of the Forms. In this state, Plato could say, the soul would be immune from changes related to mathematics or the Forms.

This solution might appear inadequate on its face, but it is stronger than it might seem. One objection to it is that our souls undergo all kinds of changes while they inhabit our bodies, but according to Plato's myths they also undergo changes in between incarnations. Both the *Phaedo* and *Republic* end with myths in which souls have many experiences in the afterlife. They forget their former lives, make choices about their next lives, and so on. Each of these experiences implies changing mental states on the part of the souls undergoing them. But these souls are no longer in their human bodies; does this not contradict the claim that souls only appear to change insofar as they are involved with bodies? In fact it does not, for Plato can reply that while involvement with a particular human body is the source of changes for souls in this condition, it does not follow from this that when a soul leaves its own body, it also leaves the realm of the visible as a whole. Part of the point of these myths may be precisely that separation from one's own human (or animal, or plant) body is not sufficient to separate one from the realm of the bodily; the souls in these myths are still interested in and thus involved with the bodily, visible realm in general. This is enough, Plato could say, to account for the changes these souls exhibit. And Socrates explains the afterlife in just these terms. First he suggests that the soul of a philosopher goes to Hades, "if it is pure

when it leaves the body and drags nothing bodily with it..." (80e2-3). He then explains the phenomenon of ghosts with reference to the soul's involvement with the physical:

...these are not the souls of good but of inferior men, which are forced to wander there...They wander until their longing for that which accompanies them, the physical, again imprisons them in a body, and they are then, as is likely, bound to such characters as they have practiced in their life. (*Phaedo* 81d6-e4)<sup>143</sup>

The souls of good men, we may suppose, may be experiencing something better than this prior to their next incarnations; the souls of the best have escaped the realm of the visible altogether.

A second objection might say that if the true individual soul is changeless, and thus includes none of the memories, preferences, plans, and so on that we typically identify as ourselves in this life, then Plato's theory will not after all show that there is any personal survival in reality. What we think of as personality turns out to be an artifact of the soul's involvement with change, and Plato's message is that this is what souls have to divest themselves of. So the individual personality would be an illusion, a sort of disease caused by the soul's involvement with the body. Socrates' remark that "our souls will really dwell in the underworld" (*Phaedo*

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<sup>143</sup>Archer-Hind comments: "The presence of this material alloy is sufficient to inspire the soul with bodily desires but cannot afford the means to gratify them: so that the longing grows more and more intense until the soul is once more confined in her earthy prison." (Archer-Hind 1894, p. 54) Authors with similar comments: Bostock (1986, p. 27), Dorter (1982, pp. 78-79), Burnet (1911, p. 73). Halliwell notes that the souls depicted in the myth of Er resemble the souls discussed through the previous nine books of the Republic, defeating the expectation that the myth would present the soul in the pure state alluded to by the analogy with Glaucus (2007, pp. 462-463). Bostock (2001, p. 247) spells out an absurd view on which Plato means that particles of matter cling to souls, even when they are disembodied. He points out that this view would lead to many absurdities, and concludes, "His point was just that the soul retains its desires for things bodily."

107a1) is consistent with this thought: perhaps Socrates means that our souls will continue to be personally identifiable in the underworld, since if they are in the underworld *ipso facto* they will not have managed to escape to the changeless realm where they go back to being what they really are, namely something lacking any personality. There are at least two ways of filling in Plato's position on this point. On the first, there are in reality no individual souls, or alternatively, individual souls are numerically distinct but qualitatively identical (if we allow violations of the law of identity of non-discernables). On the second, souls are both numerically and qualitatively distinct, in virtue of some feature(s) analogous to those of the numbers. The justification for this view is that if the numbers can be eternal and distinct from one another, then there must be features by which souls could also be differentiated. It is thus possible for Plato to maintain both that souls are changeless in reality and also that they are distinct from one another. Neither of these views solves the problem that the real soul would have little, if anything in common with the things of which human beings are aware in themselves.

This concludes the discussion of the visible/invisible distinction. The other important distinction for the theory of the soul is that between Forms and participants. Individual souls fall on the opposite side of this division from the Forms, and are grouped along with the objects in the visible world. This distinction presents fewer philosophical problems than the first. The main problem here is why Plato chose to put souls on the participant side of this distinction, but it seems obvious that this was his only way of addressing his concerns about the individual soul. Putting souls on the Form side of the division would have made them automatically changeless and eternal, but would have suffered from two disadvan-

tages. First, as already noted, individual souls would have had nothing in common with the personalities and minds of which we are aware in our ordinary consciousness.<sup>144</sup> Second, Plato would have had to either give up his One Over Many argument for Forms, or if he retained it, it would have implied that there can be at most one soul, the Form of Soul. For both reasons, then, given his assumptions, Plato had little choice but to treat souls as participants in Forms alongside the members of the visible realm.

*Republic* 611b–612a may be the most direct evidence that Plato treats individual souls as individuals rather than as Forms. In this passage Socrates also claims that the number of individual souls must always remain fixed. This suggests that he does not think that individual souls merge into the Form of Soul or otherwise lose their individuality, even if they succeed in leaving the realm of the visible and changing. Plato's attempt to provide an argument for this claim suggests that he is aware of these problems.

Combining these two distinctions, souls are invisible individuals, and it turns out that *only* souls occupy this position. This in turn provides some foundation and justification for a common claim among scholars, that individual souls occupy an intermediate position between the Forms and the physical world.<sup>145</sup> We can add that without the Form of Soul, souls could not be intermediates. They

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<sup>144</sup>To be clear: even if we accept that souls are invisible individuals, this is not yet enough to show that or how personal identity can survive through different incarnations. But it is at least a start. If souls were not individual items, the problem would be insoluble at the outset. Given that they are individuals, I take it that the problem might be soluble.

<sup>145</sup>Bluck finds this relation generated by the affinity argument (78b–84b): “It is probable, then that Plato's primary intention here was simply to emphasize the peculiar nature of the object with which our arguments are concerned — that it is not like ordinary physical phenomena at all, but something that has strong affinity with a very different class of things. The soul is thus brought into relation with the theory of Forms...” (Bluck 1954, p. 22)

would instead occupy a metaphysical space not related either to the Forms or to the physical world.

## 1.10 Conclusion

We have seen that in both the *Phaedo* and *Republic* there are ample grounds for recognizing the Form of Soul, in spite of the fact that it is never mentioned. The Form of Soul is essential to the Imitation Theory; without it, individual souls would have nothing to imitate *qua* souls. That is, it is clear that souls imitate the Forms of the virtues, for example, in order to become more virtuous. But we can also ask whether souls imitate anything in order to be souls, and the answer is momentous: either souls are what they most basically are in virtue of imitating a Form, or they are metaphysical free agents, unbound to anything outside themselves, at least so far as Plato's texts make explicit. The *Phaedo* and *Republic* opt for the Imitation Theory, making souls dependent, in some sense, on Forms for all their properties. On this theory, the common observation that souls stand between and mediate the two worlds of Plato's metaphysics seems justified.

## Chapter 2

# The Kinetic Theory

### 2.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 was about the Form of Soul, and its role in the Imitation Theory; this chapter is about the theory of κίνησις (“motion”) in the *Timaeus*; Chapter 3 will explain the Self-Mover Theory in the *Phaedrus*, *Timaeus*, *Laws* and *Statesman*.<sup>1</sup>

Why think that κίνησις is a central concept in some of Plato’s dialogues? First, Plato twice gives a definition of the soul as “motion capable of moving itself” (*Phaedrus* 245e7–246a1, *Laws* 896a1–2). Given Plato’s pervasive interest in definitions and in souls, his willingness to endorse a definition of soul cannot fail to be important. Second, Plato’s use of κίνησις and related words is frequent within a group of Plato’s works sometimes classified as late, but rare outside this group.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>I shall usually use the Greek word, to avoid prejudicing my argument by translating it one way or another, since this is the issue I will be discussing. κίνησις is the singular, while the plural is κινήσεις. Throughout this chapter and those following, “motion” means locomotion, motion through space.

<sup>2</sup>Cooper lists as Plato’s latest works the *Laws*, *Timaeus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, and *Critias*, and adds to them the four “latest of the non-late group,” *Republic*, *Parmenides*, *Theaetetus*, and *Phaedrus*. For my purposes it makes no difference whether this attempt to sort out the chronology of the dialogues succeeds; my point is just that there is a subset of Plato’s dialogues in which motion-words are used

A TLG lemmatized search for forms of κινέω and κίνησις shows that of the 445 times these two words occur in Plato's texts, only 20 instances fall outside the (so-called) late dialogues. Thus, roughly 96% of instances of these two terms fall in the "late" group. This does not tell us much, of course. But, like an irregular bump on the surface of an archaeological site, it may indicate something beneath the surface that is worth investigating. For developmentalists, it is worth asking why Plato begins using forms of κιν- in roughly the last period of his writings, when he had found little occasion for them earlier. For unitarians, it is worth asking why Plato uses this family of words so often in these dialogues, but rarely in his others: the disparity prompts us to look for other features that differentiate these sets from one another. I propose that in these works (and especially in the *Timaeus*) Plato constructs a theory of change, according to which changes are nothing but instances of locomotion. The theory is quite broad, covering not only qualitative changes such as those of color or temperature, but extends to changes of material composition, and even to temporal changes. The theory can be summarized as the slogan that κίνησις, in the sense of "locomotion," is the genus of γένεσις.

This chapter explains how *Timaeus*' account makes all non-psychic changes into locomotion, in four parts. First I survey Plato's remarks on shape and motion. This is the place to begin, since shape and motion are more basic concepts than spatial motion, and it strengthens my case to show that Plato's dialogues employ

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much more often than outside this set, and it happens that the set showing intensive use of these words largely, but not perfectly, coincides with Cooper's chronological grouping. I ran several searches in the TLG, using both the lemmatized and word index functions. None are perfect. Issues include whether to include works known or suspected of being spurious (I excluded them), and whether to include the *Timaeus*, since its subject matter easily accounts for its many instances of κιν- roots. The result is nearly as striking, however, if the *Timaeus* is excluded. Further, it is important to ask which of these hundreds of uses carries some philosophical weight, and which are philosophically uninteresting. Numerical results cannot tell us this, of course.

consistent approaches to shape and motion, prior to arguing that they contain a more ambitious theory of spatial motion. For example, Shorey assumes that the classification of ten motions in *Laws X* is casual, writing, “Plato amuses himself with a classification of ten kinds of motion.”<sup>3</sup> If he is right, my claims cannot go forward; so I first argue that a number of dialogues classify shape and motion in the same ways. Second, I discuss the part of *Timaeus*’ theory that describes the composition of matter out of the four elements, and ultimately out of two kinds of triangle (53b–64a). This aspect of *Timaeus*’ theory presents few philosophical difficulties, so for my purposes I need do little more than point out how it complements the other parts of the Kinetic Theory. Third, *Timaeus* adds time to the Kinetic Theory by claiming that time is nothing but the spatial motions of the heavenly bodies (37c–39e). In this part I will argue that *Timaeus*’ comments, although somewhat cryptic, express a reductionist theory about time. Fourth, *Timaeus* introduces a metaphysical category he calls the receptacle (ὑποδοχή), seeming to say it is space, or perhaps matter, or some combination of the two. This section of the *Timaeus* is one of the murkiest, and I will not claim to solve its many problems. But the Kinetic Theory’s existence does create a consideration relevant for readings of the receptacle. This consideration does not solve the debates about the receptacle’s nature, but it does add weight to one side of that debate.<sup>4</sup>

*Timaeus* makes the concept of κίνησις the genus into which he puts all forms

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<sup>3</sup>Shorey (1933, pp. 643 ad 893–894)

<sup>4</sup>I am not aware of any discussion of this overall claim about Plato’s theory of change in the scholarly literature. The position closest to mine is Johansen (2004, p. 125). He draws the connection between *Timaeus*’ geometric theory of the four elements and the fact that the receptacle must provide the space or place for these geometric motions to occur. My account goes somewhat beyond his in that I include time as another form of change that is reduced to spatial motion in the *Timaeus*.



of change. His arguments for including each kind of change are not always clear or cogent, and he also fails to draw attention to the fact that his explanations of the elements, of time, and of the receptacle, are like three pieces made to fit together, but lying apart from one another. As with the Form of Soul in the previous chapter, there is a significant theory, with important implications, available in the *Timaeus*, but the speaker is content to present its pieces without ever mentioning its existence as a single theory. I will not speculate why *Timaeus* never mentions this as a single theory; to do so would involve other quite involved aspects of the dialogue, such as how much *Timaeus* thinks we can know about the visible world, what form of the theory of Forms *Timaeus* subscribes to, and what he means by calling his account a “likely story” (ἐικῶς μῦθος).

## 2.2 Spatial Motion

### Round and Straight Shapes

Plato’s dialogues make only brief and scattered remarks about shape and motion.<sup>5</sup> But these fragmentary analyses present nearly the same divisions of types each time they occur in one of the dialogues.

Since Plato’s dialogues sometimes claim that the visible world is in constant change (and never contradict this, so far as I am aware), these works imply that, strictly, there is no such thing as a static shape in the visible world.<sup>6</sup> Anything visi-

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<sup>5</sup>Cornford notes a complication, writing, “The figures [sc. the Platonic solids] are not the actual shapes of existing particles, which can only be imperfect copies, but the perfect types, belonging to the intelligible world of mathematics” (Cornford 1937, p.210). But this point will not make any difference in my argument.

<sup>6</sup>*Phaedo* 78d10–e6, *Republic* 509b1–3, 529b5. On *Phaedo* 78e Archer-Hind remarks, “This is one

ble is somehow changing, and in the *Timaeus* this means being in motion spatially. Thus, his view about the possible shapes of appearances leads into his views about the possible types of motion. I begin at the most general level, with his analysis of appearances, then move on to discuss his analysis of motion.

Plato holds that shape (τὸ σχῆμα) and color (τὸ χρῶμα) make an exhaustive division of the genus appearance.<sup>7</sup> Plato has the habit of mentioning color and shape together, implying that he believes these two elements account for the appearance of physical things.<sup>8</sup> This pairing occurs in dialogues of all periods, and in widely varying contexts: from *Gorgias* 474b, where Socrates characterizes cosmetics as a kind of flattery, to *Republic* 373b, where he describes the professions that the enlarged city will contain, to *Laws* 797c, where the Athenian complains about innovation in children's games. Going beyond the mere association of the terms, Plato also provides a definition of shape. When Meno asks Socrates to illustrate the kind of definition he wants, Socrates offers him two definitions of shape, of which the first is: "[S]hape is that which *alone* of existing things always follows colour" (*Meno* 75b10–11, emphasis mine).<sup>9</sup> Since shape is the *only* thing always

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of many passages which show that Plato thoroughly accepted the doctrines of Herakleitos and Protagoras so far as regards the material world." There seems to be no disagreement on the import of the passage: Rowe (1993, p. 184), Gallop (1975, p. 139), Bluck (1954, p. 73), Burnet (1911, pp. 77–78), Archer-Hind (1894, p. 48).

<sup>7</sup>Noted by Wedberg: "When figure is said to be the only thing that is always copresent with colour, Plato obviously has our visual percepts in mind: he asserts that, in visual perception, colour and figure are always combined" (Wedberg 1955, p. 47)

<sup>8</sup>On this point I attribute the view in question to Plato, since it appears in so many and such varied contexts in his work, and is never contradicted. An incomplete sample of passages where these two terms are used in tandem: *Cratylus* 423d4, 431c6, 432b7, *Gorgias* 465b4, 474d4, 474e2, *Laws* 668e3, 669a1, 669c5, 797c2, *Meno* 75a1, 75b10, 76a7, *Phaedo* 100d1, *Philebus* 47a7, 51b4, *Republic* 373b6, 601a2, *Sophist* 251a9, *Theaetetus* 163b10. The association is also noted by Thompson (1901, p. 89 n. 24), and easily visible in Ast (1838, p. 559 s.v. χρῶμα).

<sup>9</sup>τοῦτο σχῆμα, ὃ μόνον τῶν ὄντων τυγχάνει χρώματι αἰεὶ ἐπόμενον. I assume that Socrates endorses the definition he gives Meno; it would be strange to offer him a model that he himself considers bad. Socrates says in the same passage that a good answer must be true (75d5–6). Socrates

accompanying color, it follows that appearances (in the visible world, of course) can be exhaustively divided into their shapes and colors. If one performed this division, Socrates is saying, there would be no further element one could point to in any given appearance that would have escaped the division into shape and color.<sup>10</sup> Both Plato's habit of associating "color" and "shape" and the way he has Socrates define "shape" imply that he thinks the two together exhaust the category of appearance. This suggests that Plato would say that other visible appearances (tables, mountain goats, triangles, etc.) occupy lower levels of classification. This is why these others do not always accompany color: if I am seeing a patch of a certain color, it will sometimes turn out that I am also seeing a mountain goat, sometimes not. But it will always turn out that I am seeing some shape.<sup>11</sup>

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offers a second definition of shape as "the limit of a solid" (76a7), and there is a controversy among scholars as to which of these definitions is better and why. For general discussion see King (2007, pp. 397–401) and Tuozzo (2003). Thompson thinks the first definition commits "the fallacy of defining *ignotum per ignotius*." (1901, p. 89). But this criticism takes "color" as a particular color rather than the genus; when understood as the genus, as it must be, there is no fallacy. Merkelbach calls the second definition "technisch besser," but finds no substantive fault with it (1988, p. 30 n. 39). Day observes that "all three definitions can be faulted for not picking out the right phenomena," and leaves this exercise "to the reader" (1994, p. 20). But if the thought is that geometric figures may be imagined without color, one can reply that 1) in fact it is not clear that this is possible, and 2) on the reading I am proposing, the fault does not arise because the definition applies to shapes in the realm of appearance, not in the ideal realm of Forms or purely mathematical objects. Day and Crombie point out that this definition is similar to one Socrates rejects in the *Euthyphro*, but as Crombie remarks, "it seems fair to comment that the models Socrates offers suggest that he is not too clear what he wants as an answer to a Socratic question": Day (1994, p. 20), Crombie (1976, p. 188). The issue here is whether it is reasonable to attribute this definition to Socrates and to Plato; the questions raised about the definition within its immediate context do not trump the larger pattern of statements about shape, which suggest that Plato did think this definition true. Agreeing that Socrates endorses this definition are Weiss (2006, p. 153), Weiss (2001, p. 29), González (1998, p. 161).

<sup>10</sup>Noted by Thomas (1980, pp. 98–99), Klein (1965, p. 59), Guthrie (1962, Volume IV p. 248). Of course this is not the claim that nothing exists but appearance; it is only the claim that appearance as such is exhaustively divisible into shape and color; this point is also made by Thomas (1980, p. 100).

<sup>11</sup>Ordinary items like mountain goats would need to go into an altogether different classificatory scheme, since each of them includes both a shape and a color. The appearance of a table, for example, cannot be exclusively a species of color or of shape, since it has both. This does not in-

So Plato divides appearances into color and shape. He divides shape, in turn, into two kinds: straight (τὸ εὐθύ) and curved (or round, τὸ στρογγύλον).<sup>12</sup> As with “shape” and “color,” the main evidence for this is the fact that these two categories are named together in a wide variety of contexts: in the following passages, they appear together without reference to any other term at the same level. First, in the *Philebus*, Socrates says, “For shape is all one in genus, but some of its parts are absolutely opposite to one another, and others differ in innumerable ways” (*Philebus* 12e7–13a2). So Plato thinks of shape as a genus — presumably as a *real* genus in nature, not merely an artificial one.<sup>13</sup> Presumably round and straight are two of the opposites mentioned here; the reference to other “parts” of shape must be to items lower down on the classificatory scheme. (The reference to other parts of shape that differ “in innumerable ways” will be taken up below.)

This division of shape into straight and curved is of little philosophical interest, but was also a commonplace among Greek thinkers. Wedberg writes,

If it is asked what concepts Plato had in mind, it is here sufficient to point out that he entirely shared what may be called — without any pejorative implications — the naïve intuitive understanding of the concepts of Euclidean geometry...<sup>14</sup>.

He goes on to illustrate this claim with the definition of straight from the *Par-*

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validate the division of appearance into shape and color; it only suggests that Plato would accept different classification schemes as equally valid.

<sup>12</sup>Noted by Morrison (1959, p. 104). Brisson notes that in geometrical contexts, σχῆμα means either a two-dimensional shape bounded by lines or a three-dimensional shape bounded by surfaces (1992, p. 233 n. 143).

<sup>13</sup>Cf. *Statesman* 262a–263e.

<sup>14</sup>Wedberg (1955, p. 47). Another comment to the same effect: “As in Euclidean geometry, all shapes are derivable from the circle and the straight line, as required by the classical ‘compass and straight-edge’ restriction” (Scolnicov et al. 2003, p. 82 ad 137e1)

*menides*. Heath identifies the classification of *lines*, at least, into straight and curved as part of the doctrine of the Pythagoreans, of Plato and of Aristotle.<sup>15</sup> And Gould observes,

...Greek mathematicians attempted habitually to limit their mechanical tools to the compass and the straightedge, as though rectilinear and circular lines were the chief and natural species of all things in two dimensions.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, Ballew identifies straight and circular as common and basic themes pervading Greek literature and philosophy:

Images of straightness and circularity...pervade all extant Greek literature, including philosophical literature...Straight and circular are generally considered to be the two basic shapes and motions: neither is reducible to a form of the other, and all other shapes and motions are usually described as subspecies of these two.<sup>17</sup>

If there were other categories than “round” and “straight” at the first level of division below “shape,” then we could expect Plato to mention some of them somewhere; in fact, however, he mentions only these two in a number of passages where shape comes up. For example, as Socrates is trying to show Meno how to answer his question about virtue, he uses shape as a model: “...what is this which applies no less to the round than to the straight, which you call shape; and you

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<sup>15</sup>Heath (1908, p. 159). He implies vaguely that Plato understands “shape” as either round or straight, without any more detailed comment on this question (1921, p. 293).

<sup>16</sup>Gould (1963, p. 138)

<sup>17</sup>Ballew (1979, pp. 1–2). Although I have cited her conclusion in support of my own claims, I must add that she frequently cites passages as if they discuss straight-line motions where this is no more than a possible inference from what is said. But my claims are considerably less sweeping than hers.

say that the round is no more shape than the straight?” (*Meno* 74d7–e2).<sup>18</sup> In the *Parmenides* as well, Parmenides reasons that the One “is also without shape; for it partakes of neither round nor straight” (*Parmenides* 137d8–e1).<sup>19</sup> And in the *Seventh Letter* Plato (if it is Plato) writes, “The same thing is true of straight-lined as well as of circular figures...” (*Seventh Letter* 342d3–4). Later in the *Parmenides* passage, Parmenides gives definitions of “round” and straight”:

Round is surely that whose extremities are equidistant in every direction from the middle. — Yes. — Furthermore, straight is that whose middle stands in the way of the two extremities. — Just so. — So the one would have parts and be many if it partook of either a straight or a curved shape. — Of course. — Therefore it is neither straight nor curved, since in fact it doesn’t have parts. — That’s right. (*Parmenides* 137e1–138a1)<sup>20</sup>

No candidate for any other member of the genus “shape” is mentioned in any of these passages, so the division into round and straight seems to be exhaustive.<sup>21</sup> The examples of the method of division in the *Sophist* and *Statesman* typically involve divisions of a genus into two species; this fact also suggests that round and straight divide “shape” exhaustively for Plato.

<sup>18</sup>...ὅτι ἐστὶν τοῦτο ὃ οὐδὲν ἦττον κατέχει τὸ στρογγύλον ἢ τὸ εὐθύ, ὃ δὴ ὀνομάζεις σχῆμα καὶ οὐδὲν μᾶλλον φῆς τὸ στρογγύλον σχῆμα εἶναι ἢ τὸ εὐθύ; White gives the implicit argument of this passage (1976, pp. 33–34).

<sup>19</sup>Noted by J. S. Morrison (1959, p. 109).

<sup>20</sup>Essentially the same definition for “round” is given at *Timaeus* 33b4–5. Rickless comments that these “certainly appear to be” definitions of “round” and “straight”; on his analysis of the argument, it is not strictly true that anything with shape must be either straight or round. But he adds that this “is also the kind of objection that D1A5 [his designation for the deduction here] could easily be massaged to avoid.” So he concludes that “Far from being obviously false, these are eminently reasonable assumptions, at least from Plato’s perspective.” (Rickless 2007, p. 116)

<sup>21</sup>Later Platonists took “round” and “straight” as symbols; I take them in the “vulgar mathematical sense” rejected by Proclus; see Morrow and Dillon (1992, pp. 469–470).

We find further confirmation that this division is exhaustive when Plato twice says that shapes other than the round and the straight are combinations of these two. Parmenides reasons at a later stage of the deductions that, “Since the one is like that, it would partake of some shape, as it seems, either straight or round, or some shape mixed from both” (*Parmenides* 145b3–5).<sup>22</sup> Here the deductive context also shows that the division must be exhaustive; were it not, Parmenides’ argument would be invalid.<sup>23</sup> And in the *Philebus*, Socrates says (à propos of the beauty of shapes), “What I mean, what the argument demands, is rather something straight or round and what is constructed out of these with a compass, rule, and square, such as plane figures and solids” (*Philebus* 51c3–6).<sup>24</sup> Both statements imply that Plato thinks all shapes are either round, straight, or a combination of the two. Aristotle also treats straight and curved as an exhaustive set of alternatives, at least for the sides of plane figures (*de Caelo* 286b13–14).

However, Plato does sometimes refer to shapes other than round and straight, without saying just what shapes he has in mind; so we must consider whether this shows that he has a more complicated taxonomy of shape than the simple alternative of “round” or “straight.” We have seen one example already from *Philebus* 12e–13a. Another occurs at *Meno* 75a6–8, where Socrates puts a question in the mouth of an imaginary interlocutor: “What is this which applies to the round and the straight *and the other things which you call shapes...*?” Again, *Timaeus* speaks of “‘triangle’ or *any of the other shapes that come to be...*” (*Timaeus* 50b2–3). These pas-

<sup>22</sup>Καὶ σχήματος δὴ τινος, ὡς ἔοικε, τοιοῦτον ὄν μετέχει ἂν τὸ ἓν, ἥτοι εὐθέος ἢ στρογγύλου ἢ τινος μεικτοῦ ἐξ ἀμφοῖν.

<sup>23</sup>Rickless recognizes this point as well (2007, p. 116).

<sup>24</sup>...ἀλλ’ εὐθύ τι λέγω, φησὶν ὁ λόγος, καὶ περιφερὲς καὶ ἀπὸ τούτων δὴ τὰ τε τοῖς τórνοις γιγνόμενα ἐπίπεδά τε καὶ στερεὰ καὶ τοῖς κανόσι καὶ γωνίαις, ...

sages refer to shapes other than the round and the straight, but need not imply that there are more categories than “round” and “straight” as immediate divisions of the genus “shape.” There are two ways of taking these references consistently with my argument. First, one might suppose that the imaginary questioner in either passage (*Meno* 75 or *Timaeus* 50b) thinks there are more shapes than the round and the straight, and the language uses terms that this questioner would find natural. The answers, then, mention other shapes because the speaker does not assume that the questioner shares the theoretical commitment to Plato’s way of dividing the genus “shape.” In particular, Meno is clearly a newcomer to Socrates’ ideas about definitions, so it would be natural for Socrates to speak to him without assuming his own views on the division of shape. Timaeus mentions other shapes along with “triangle,” which is neither round nor (simply) straight. So it is reasonable to think that Timaeus is not discussing *this* level of classification; plausible candidates for “other shapes” at the same level as triangle are square, oval, rhombus, etc. So in neither of these cases do we have a clear reference to any further category at the same level as round and straight.

## Round and Straight Motions

Motion should divide into the same categories as shape, so we should expect Plato to divide motions into the straight and the rounded, with others analyzed as a combination of the two. Timaeus 43b mentions six motions: forward, back, right, left, up and down; these are straight-line motions, since, as we will see, Plato distinguishes them from rounded motions in other contexts.<sup>25</sup> In another passage

<sup>25</sup>*Timaeus* 43a7–b5: ...ὥστε τὸ μὲν ὅλον κινεῖσθαι ζῶον, ἀτάκτως μὴν ὅπη τύχοι προῖέναι καὶ ἀλόγως, τὰς ἐξ ἀπάσας κινήσεις ἔχον· εἷς τε γὰρ τὸ πρόσθε καὶ ὀπίσθεν καὶ πάλιν εἰς δεξιὰ καὶ ἀριστερὰ



Timaeus mentions seven motions: six of these are presumably the same as those given at 43b, and the seventh is the one the demiurge gives to the body of the universe.<sup>26</sup>

In fact, he awarded it the movement suited to its body — that one of the seven motions which is especially associated with understanding and intelligence. And so he set it turning continuously in the same place, spinning around upon itself. All the other six motions he took away, and made it free of their wanderings. (*Timaeus* 34a1–5)<sup>27</sup>

Since the body of the universe is spherical (*Timaeus* 33b), “the movement suited to its body” is rotation on an axis, i.e. a rounded movement.

But a completely different list of motions appears at *Laws* X, 893b–894e.<sup>28</sup> Here the Athenian says there are ten motions, but does not identify all of them clearly. The first motion is described as rotation about a center or axis (*Laws* X 893c4–d5). Like the rectilinear motions from the *Timaeus*, this list seems to be organized in pairs of opposites, and this helps to sort out what the members are supposed to

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κάτω τε καὶ ἄνω καὶ πάντα κατὰ τοὺς ἕξ τόπους πλανώμενα προήειν. The phrase τὰς ἕξ ἀπάσας κινήσεις is translated by Zeyl “all six of the motions”, but does not necessarily assert that there are *only* six motions. A more literal rendering, that preserves the ambiguity of the Greek, would be “all the six motions.” Aristotle also uses these six as a classification of motions: *de Caelo* 284b20–286a2, *IA* 705a26–28.

<sup>26</sup>This is also the reading of Karfik (2004). Brisson, in addition to implicitly endorsing this analysis, notes that Plato has created a hierarchy of movements, from the universe itself, which has only rotation, to the fixed stars that partake of rotation and also *one* of the six rectilinear motions, to the bodies described at 43b which have all six rectilinear motions, but no circular ones. The hierarchy shows the extent to which the young creatures of 43b are chaotic: Brisson (1992, p. 242 n. 265), followed by Miller (2003, pp. 47–48).

<sup>27</sup>κίνησιν γὰρ ἀπένειμεν αὐτῷ τὴν τοῦ σώματος οἰκείαν, τῶν ἑπτὰ τὴν περὶ νοῦν καὶ φρόνησιν μάλιστα οὔσαν· διὸ δὴ κατὰ ταῦτα ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ καὶ ἐν ἑαυτῷ περιαγῶν αὐτὸ ἐποίησε κύκλῳ κινεῖσθαι στρεφόμενον, τὰς δὲ ἕξ ἀπάσας κινήσεις ἀφεῖλεν καὶ ἀπλανὲς ἀπηργάσατο ἐκείνων.

<sup>28</sup>The difference is noted by Archer-Hind (1888, p. 148 ad 4).

be.<sup>29</sup> Since the first type is called motion “in one place” (ἐν μιᾷ ἔδρᾳ, 893c3), the second type seems to be motion in several places (ἐν πλείοσιν, 893c4).<sup>30</sup>

Skipping to the end of the list, the last two types of motion do not fit on the same level of classification as the other eight:

ATHENIAN: The one kind of motion is that which is permanently capable of moving other things but not itself; the other is permanently capable of moving *both* itself and *other* things by processes of combination and separation, increase and diminution, generation and destruction. Let these stand as two further types in our complete list of motions. (Laws 894b8–c1, emphasis in Saunders’ translation)<sup>31</sup>

These two kinds of motion are defined by whether or not they are capable of moving themselves; thus they cut across the other types.

Assuming that the text between 893c and 894b mentions the six missing kinds of motion, then these must be the ones that the Athenian describes just after he explains his tenth type of motion, for he goes on to specify the motions *by which* the tenth type is able to work. They are “combination and separation, increase and diminution, generation and destruction” (συγκρίσεις ἔν τε διακρίσεσιν αὐξαις τε καὶ τῷ ἐναντίῳ καὶ γενέσεσι καὶ φθοραῖς, 894b10–11). These six processes can be matched up with the text from 893e–894a, although without these external clues it would be considerably less clear what the missing six motions are supposed to

<sup>29</sup>Karfik adds that the list seems to proceed by the method of division (2004, p. 228).

<sup>30</sup>One way of getting alternatives to the list I present above is to count motion in several places as more than one type, as mentioned by Skemp (1942, p. 99).

<sup>31</sup>Ἐστω τοίνυν ἡ μὲν ἕτερα δυνάμενη κινεῖν κίνησις, ἐαυτὴν δὲ ἀδυνατοῦσα, αἰεὶ μία τις, ἡ δὲ αὐτὴν τ’ αἰεὶ καὶ ἕτερα δυνάμενη κατὰ τε συγκρίσεις ἔν τε διακρίσεσιν αὐξαις τε καὶ τῷ ἐναντίῳ καὶ γενέσεσι καὶ φθοραῖς ἄλλη μία τις αὐτῶν πασῶν κινήσεων.

be.<sup>32</sup> Other lists have also been proposed.<sup>33</sup> Before discussing the significance of this list, there are more details of its classificatory scheme to attend to.

First, the division of motion into self-moving and non-self-moving is exhaustive. There is logical space for three other types, but no reason to think Plato recognized any members of those types. For example, motion that moves *only* itself but not other things: presumably Plato would think any motion capable of moving itself *a fortiori* capable of moving other things. Motion capable *only* of moving itself would conflict with the Athenian's claim that self-moving motion is "the most powerful and radically effective" (*Laws* X 894d1–2). Again, there is a possible category of motion that moves neither itself nor anything else. An object in this kind of motion would not interact causally with anything (neither itself nor anything else), at least not if the transmission of motion were involved. But no text mentions objects of these sorts, so the division of motions into self-moving and non-self-moving must be exhaustive. It follows that this division is independent of the eight other categories of motion listed in the passage.

Shortly after the speech quoted above, the Athenian claims that the definition of soul is self-moving motion; it follows that motions in soulless things belong to the category of non-self-moving motion. Since the non-self-moving motions

<sup>32</sup>This is the list favored by Mayhew (2008, p. 118) and Skemp (1942, p. 99).

<sup>33</sup>Solmsen finds little use of the method of division in this passage, while Karfik thinks there is little *but* this method: Solmsen (1960, p. 34), Karfik (2004, p. 228). Carone follows Skemp, and adds that the list in the *Laws* does not contradict those in the *Timaeus*, since the six rectilinear motions there (in the *Timaeus*) would be classified under the category of "motion in several places" here in the *Laws* (2005, p. 254 n. 10). For a survey of the lists of some prominent commentators, as well as a careful classification of everything mentioned in this passage, see Karfik (2004, pp. 227–233, esp. n. 109). Parry accepts the same list I give above (2001, p. 269). Steiner also gives a careful discussion and survey of the history of interpretations of this passage (1992, pp. 127–149). Solmsen is unsure how to identify the members of the list, and doubts that it is intended to be precise (1960, pp. 34–36). Shorey writes, "Plato amuses himself with a classification of ten kinds of motion." (Shorey 1933, pp. 643 ad 893–894)

can be either straight or rounded, it follows from this consideration also that the division of motion into self-moving and non-self-moving is orthogonal to the division into round and straight and their subtypes. So we should expect to find both straight and round instances of self-motion: all possible combinations of these two ways of classifying motion should be represented.<sup>34</sup> This is confirmed by Timaeus' description of human souls being affected by collisions with the motions of other things (*Timaeus* 43d). The key claim in this passage is that motions from outside the body affect the motions of the soul. The most natural reading is that straight-line motions from outside the body add a component of straightness to soul-motions, and conversely, that the study of circular motions (somehow) helps souls restore their own circular motions. We find some confirmation for this reading in the closing passages of the *Timaeus*, where the origin of non-human animals is described.

Land animals...came from men...who made no study of the heavens whatsoever, because they no longer made use of the revolutions in their heads but instead followed the lead of the parts of the soul that reside in the chest...The tops of their heads became elongated and took all sorts of shapes, depending on the particular way in which the revolutions were squeezed together from lack of use. (*Timaeus* 91e2–92a2)<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Here I assume that if a motion is not perfectly circular, it is to be analyzed as a combination of rounded and straight. So when we read that some soul-motions are imperfectly circular, it follows that their motions are partly straight. I doubt, however, that it is possible for any soul to have exclusively straight motions; this might be part of what differentiates souls from visible objects.

<sup>35</sup>Noted by Carone (2005, p. 211 n. 68) and Karfik (2004, p. 240). Taylor considers the passage “pure humor” (1928, p. 642). Some note the role of this passage in Plato's explanation of evil: Scolnicov (1997, p. 364), Brisson (1994, p. 452).

This explanation assumes that the revolutions of the soul can be more or less circular, and so can partake of either of the basic types of motion.<sup>36</sup>

Having seen how Plato's texts categorize motions, we can turn to the Kinetic Theory expounded by Timaeus. Since this theory reduces all kinds of change to spatial motions, it will at certain points be useful to know how spatial motions are analyzed in their own right.

## 2.3 Qualitative Change

This section discusses Plato's classification of qualitative change as a kind of κίνησις. The range of changes involved here is wide, taking in most of physics, chemistry and biology, including the physiological changes leading to perception in animals. For the most part the claims in this section should be uncontroversial. They are best known from the *Timaeus*, although they are also alluded to in the *Parmenides*, where I begin.

*Parmenides* 138b7–139b2, says that the only kinds of motion are change in place and alteration.<sup>37</sup> Parmenides and the “young Aristotle” agree on this claim as if it is self-evident.

The claim that ἀλλοίωσις (“alteration”) is a kind of κίνησις (“motion”), if read in isolation, might well seem odd or inexplicable.<sup>38</sup> But it is worked out in explicit detail in the *Timaeus*, by explaining how alteration is reducible to the motions of

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<sup>36</sup>Aristotle endorses a similar analysis with regard to the relative size of the upper and lower parts of the bodies of animals, holding that heavier bodies force animals onto all four limbs and also prevent them from thinking rationally: *PA* 686a25–b11.

<sup>37</sup>Ὅτι κινούμενον γε ἢ φέροιτο ἢ ἀλλοιοῖτο ἄν' αὐτὰι γὰρ μόναι κινήσεις. (138b8–c1) The claim is implied again at *Parmenides* 162d8–e1 ff.

<sup>38</sup>For Burnyeat's reaction to the same claim in the *Theaetetus*, see Chapter 3, page 157.

particles of four of the Platonic solids, and even more ultimately, to the motions of their constituent triangles.

A significant chunk — about fifteen percent — of the *Timaeus* (53a–64a) describes the composition of the four elements out of two types of triangle. Three elements are interchangeable, in virtue of being made of the same kind of triangles (54b–d). Timaeus gives an account explaining which Platonic solid corresponds to each of the four elements, and which kind of triangle makes up each of the solids (54d–56c). He explains why there are many kinds of each of the elements rather than just one — this is due to the existence of triangles of different sizes, so that there are also, for example, particles of fire of various sizes, these in turn accounting for different kinds of fire (57c–57d). There is also an account of how various ordinary substances owe their properties to combinations of the four elements: wine, for example, is a kind of water with some fire in it (60a). Finally, Timaeus explains how ordinary objects are able to cause sensations in bodies, again resorting to the properties of the Platonic solids to justify the sensations each element is responsible for (61c–68d and 43c). We need not linger over the details of this theory, as it is well known and not very philosophically interesting.<sup>39</sup> The point here is just that Plato's theory spells out how nearly all the changes in the observable world are reducible to the spatial motions of two sorts of triangles, which in

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<sup>39</sup>This is not to say there are not interesting problems in working out its details, but just that those problems are not relevant here. For example, one much-discussed problem is if and how the constituent triangles of the solids are able to drift about by themselves when they are not part of one of the Platonic solids. Various answers have been proposed, but none of them affects the point here that the changing properties of observable objects are being attributed to the spatial motions of the Platonic solids and their constituent triangles. Even if parts of the theory suffer from problems, the point stands that this is the kind of explanation Timaeus is appealing to. For discussion of the difficulties with the theory, see Vlastos (2005, pp. 66–97) (on general questions about the status of the account as science or something else) and Miller (2003, pp. 165–166, 169–186).

turn are assembled into the particles of which the four elements consist. This is the rather pedestrian part of the theory; the interesting part will arrive with his claims that time is also reducible to motion.

I agree with Johansen's recent work on the *Timaeus*, when he writes:

The important point for our purposes is that the transformation of bodies consists in the division (*diakrisis*) and composition (*sunkrisis*) of basic triangles. The transformations simply *are* the movements of triangles in space. The coming-into-being and corruption of fire, earth, water, and air boils down to different triangles congregating and separating in space.<sup>40</sup>

This part of the Kinetic Theory is admirably clear and straightforward, so we can move on quickly to the parts requiring work to explicate. The elemental theory does not stand by itself, but forms the major part of the Kinetic Theory, which brings time under the explanatory scheme covered by spatial motion.

## 2.4 Time

So far we have seen that Plato advances a theory on which physical, chemical and biological changes are just various sorts of spatial motion. This idea is sufficiently similar to current scientific theory that it likely strikes us as neither controversial nor surprising. But Plato's project is broader than this: *Timaeus* also claims that time itself is nothing but another sort of spatial motion. The two claims thus combine to form a much broader theory, covering all changes other than those occurring in minds, and claiming that every instance of such change is at bottom

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<sup>40</sup>Johansen (2004, p. 125, emphasis in original). Miller also recognizes that in the *Timaeus*, "...physical change...is reducible to the motions of elemental bits..." (2003, p. 51).

a spatial motion. In this section I will argue that Timaeus' account of the origin of time is meant to reduce time to the motions of the heavenly bodies. That is, Timaeus holds that there is no such thing as time in the sense of an invisible, inexorable progression of moments independent of the motions of physical objects. Rather, he claims that time is nothing but the motions of the heavenly bodies, since comparisons of their spatial positions are all that allow us to measure by how "long" one event precedes or follows another. I begin by commenting on the texts in which Timaeus makes these claims; after this I will say more about how Timaeus' view answers to contemporary discussion of the nature of time.

### Text and Comment

Timaeus introduces time by explaining that the Demiurge's model when making the universe was the eternal Living Thing. Wanting to make the universe as much like its model as possible, he would have liked to make it eternal as well. But this was not possible: nothing that has come into being can be fully eternal:

And so he began to think of making a moving image of eternity: at the same time as he brought order to the heavens, he would make an eternal image, moving according to number, of eternity remaining in unity. This image, of course, is what we now call "time."

εἰκὼ δ' ἐπενόει κινητόν τινα αἰῶνος ποιῆσαι, καὶ διακοσμῶν ἅμα οὐρανὸν ποιεῖ μένοντος αἰῶνος ἐν ἐνὶ κατ' ἀριθμὸν ἰοῦσαν αἰώνιον εἰκόνα, τοῦτον δὲν δὴ χρόνον ὠνομάκαμεν. (37d5–7)

The first things we learn about time are that it is an *image* (εἰκὼ) of eternity, and that it is in motion (κινητόν). To call time an image, I take it, means that when we



look at the heavenly bodies we are reminded of eternity. In other dialogues, being an image is closely related to recollection: something that resembles another thing, and also prompts recollection of that thing is an image of it.<sup>41</sup> Timaeus, too, explains the purpose of eyesight as allowing us to see the heavenly bodies; this in turn leads us to think of number, time and philosophy (47a–b). So in this passage too, Timaeus suggests that the heavenly bodies remind us of number and time, and it is a reasonable conjecture that he would include eternity. Since time is an image of eternity, it would be odd for Timaeus to deny that the sight of time makes us think of eternity.

In the *Republic*, Socrates had said that the number one is “among the subjects that lead the soul and turn it around to look at what is” (525a1–3); here we have the converse claim that time, which moves “according to number,” also has the property of reminding us of eternity “remaining in unity.” To say that time, i.e. the heavenly bodies, *moves according to number*, must mean that the periods of the sun and planets can be measured with numbers and put into relation with one another in ratios, and that these movements are extremely regular so that they can be used reliably to make comparisons.

To say that eternity “remains in unity” is less straightforward; it is at least clear that the number one is being contrasted with the rest of the number series, and that one is associated with timelessness, the other numbers with time.<sup>42</sup> If I am right about my reading so far, at least one of Timaeus’ claims is true, namely the psychological claim that viewing the heavens is likely to remind us of eternity.

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<sup>41</sup>See *Phaedo* 72e–77a, *Republic* 523a–525b.

<sup>42</sup>*Parmenides* 141a–b also claims that the One is not in time.

Later I will argue against a competing reading of Timaeus' theory of time, on which the heavenly bodies are not themselves time, but instead form a giant clock that allows us to *measure* time.<sup>43</sup> I will refer to this competing view as the Newtonian view, for reasons explained below. But the passage just quoted already provides one reason for rejecting this reading. For on that view (to be elaborated below), time itself is an invisible, regular progression of instants, while a clock is something that *visibly* recreates this regular progression, allowing us to measure the invisible change from one instant to the next. But on that view, what a clock must imitate is *not* eternity, but something else, also changing, namely the invisible progression of instants. Timaeus' initial description of time already makes it clear that what time imitates is something which is not itself in motion, but eternity "remaining in unity." Unless we find this statement retracted or qualified in a way that alters this simple point, Timaeus' theory of time is incompatible with the view that the heavenly bodies are merely a giant clock. Instead, Timaeus is saying that the heavenly bodies *are* time — there is nothing more to time beyond the motions we can observe.

Timaeus continues,

For before the heavens came to be, there were no days or nights, no months or years. But now, at the same time as he framed the heavens, he devised their coming to be [sc. the coming-to-be of days, nights, months and years]. These [days, nights, months, years] all are parts of time, and *was* and *will be* are forms of time that have come to be. Such notions we unthinkingly but incorrectly apply to everlasting being. For we say that it *was* and *is* and *will be*, but according to the true account only the expression *is* is appropriately said of it. *Was* and *will*

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<sup>43</sup>See below, page 134 ff. on Richard Mohr's view.

be are properly said about the becoming that passes in time, for these two are motions. But that which is always changeless and motionless cannot become either older or younger in the course of time...<sup>44</sup>

ἡμέρας γὰρ καὶ νύκτας καὶ μῆνας καὶ ἐνιαυτούς, οὐκ ὄντας πρὶν οὐρανὸν γενέσθαι, τότε ἅμα ἐκείνῳ συνισταμένῳ τὴν γένεσιν αὐτῶν μηχανᾶται· ταῦτα δὲ πάντα μέρη χρόνου, καὶ τό τ' ἢν τό τ' ἔσται χρόνου γεγονότα εἶδη, ἃ δὴ φέροντες λανθάνομεν ἐπὶ τὴν αἰδίον οὐσίαν οὐκ ὁρθῶς. λέγομεν γὰρ δὴ ὡς ἦν ἔστιν τε καὶ ἔσται, τῇ δὲ τὸ ἔστιν μόνον κατὰ τὸν ἀληθεῖ λόγον προσήκει, τὸ δὲ ἦν τό τ' ἔσται περὶ τὴν ἐν χρόνῳ γένεσιν ἰοῦσαν πρέπει λέγεσθαι — κινήσεις γὰρ ἔστων, τὸ δὲ αἰεὶ κατὰ ταῦτα ἔχον ἀκινήτως οὔτε πρεσβύτερον οὔτε νεώτερον προσήκει γίγνεσθαι διὰ χρόνου... (37e1–38a4)

Timaeus calls days, nights, months and years “parts of time” (μέρη), but “was” and “will be” he calls “forms of time” (εἶδη). The smallest whole unit of measurement observable in the heavens is a day or a night (i.e. a period of continuous daylight or darkness; the 24-hour sense of “day” is a pair made up of one day and one night in Timaeus’ sense). Timaeus means that time consists of the four units of measurement he mentions and their mutual relations: we measure months using the unit of days, and years using months or days. Thus, time in general is made up of these four units. Later Timaeus will reveal that there are other units available as well, since the periods of any of the planets could also be used to measure time (39c–d). In describing the parts of time this way, Timaeus shows again that he is a reductionist. For on the Newtonian view, it is not plausible that the smallest parts of time are days or nights: Newtonianism claims that we are internally aware of time’s passage, allowing us to distinguish much smaller units than entire days and nights. A typical Newtonian view is that we are aware of “moments” or “instants.” Since time passes regularly and invisibly, on the Newtonian view, our most direct

<sup>44</sup>Zeyl’s translation, slightly modified.

access to its passage is through an (alleged) internal awareness of successive moments. If Timaeus held this view, it would make no sense for him to say that the parts of time are units as large as days and nights. On the reductionist view, however, this is just what he should say, since days and nights are the smallest units made available by the motions in the heavens.

Just after naming the parts of time, Timaeus also says that “*was and will be* are forms of time that have come to be.” It is not immediately clear what Timaeus wants to express when he speaks of *was and will be*; his phrase in Greek is τό τ’ ἦν τό τ’ ἔσται, something like “both the it was and the it will be.” But his subsequent statements show what he intends with the neuter article plus finite verb, namely a reference to *the linguistic expressions* following the article; this construction thus functions analogously to contemporary uses of quotation marks (by logicians and philosophers) to refer to linguistic expressions rather than the customary referents of those expressions.

Here is how we can be sure that this is what Timaeus intends. He immediately says that of all the *expressions* we apply to everlasting being, most are inappropriate, then adds, λέγομεν γὰρ δὴ ὡς ἦν ἔστιν τε καὶ ἔσται, τῇ δὲ τὸ ἔστιν μόνον κατὰ τὸν ἀληθῆ λόγον προσήκει (“For we say that it *was and is and will be*, but according to the true account only the expression *is* is appropriately said of it”). This sentence first *quotes* our generic statement “it is” (λέγομεν...ὡς...ἦν), and then *refers to the linguistic form* using the neuter article construction τὸ ἔστιν (“the expression ‘it is’ ”). In this sentence it is clear that the second part refers to what was quoted in the first part, so this establishes what Timaeus means when he uses the τὸ + finite verb construction. We shall see in a moment that this explanation works for

Timaeus' first two uses of this expression, while for the third and final use we will have to modify it. Finally, once this is seen, it is also clear that Timaeus is using the third-person singular finite verbs as stand-ins for their tenses; that is, "the expression 'it was' " stands for any expression using a past tense, and similarly for the present and future.

We can now examine the most puzzling statement in this passage: τὸ δὲ ἦν τό τ' ἔσται περὶ τὴν ἐν χρόνῳ γένεσιν ἰοῦσαν πρέπει λέγεσθαι...κινήσεις γὰρ ἔστων ("Was and will be are properly said about the becoming that passes in time, for these two are motions"). The first part of this sentence follows the analysis we have just given: the τὸ + finite verb construction again means "the expressions 'was' and 'will be'," and this is confirmed by the fact that the sentence makes a claim about what is properly *said*. But the end of the statement declares, "these two *are motions*." If we keep strictly to the explanation we have been using, *Timaeus* is saying that these two *expressions* or *tenses* are motions. But this cannot be right: if expressions for the past and future are motions, expressions for the present should also be motions; but Timaeus wants to contrast the past and future with the present, so this cannot be what he intends.

Plato's sentences, imitating real speech, often fail to follow strict grammar or logic, so we need not abandon our results so far. The dual verb ἔστων guarantees that Timaeus' reference is to the past and future; but he cannot mean the *expressions* for the past and future. He must therefore mean the past and future themselves. But as we have already seen, Timaeus is not a Newtonian. Rather, for Timaeus the past consists of just the motions of the heavenly bodies that have been observed, or have been used to measure events prior to the present (and similarly

for the future).<sup>45</sup> On this view, the past and future are both motions in a straightforward and non-mysterious sense. That is, each consists of the motions of the heavenly bodies that did or will take place either prior to or after the present.<sup>46</sup>

Finally, we can also see why this initially puzzling sentence shifts from referring to linguistic *expressions* for the past and future, to referring to the motions that *constitute* the past and future. For Timaeus' point in this sentence is that the past and future are *motions*, and this is why they are correctly applied to the becoming that *passes* — or more literally, 'goes' (ιοῦσαν) — in time. His claim is thus that the pair past/future and becoming are both characterized by motion, while the present and eternity are both characterized by motionlessness.<sup>47</sup>

We have now seen enough to justify ascribing the reductionist view of time to Timaeus, but there is further confirmation. Later he adds,

...people are all but ignorant of the fact that time really is the wanderings of these bodies..."

[ἄνθρωποι] ὥς ἔπος εἰπεῖν οὐκ ἴσασιν χρόνον ὄντα τὰς τούτων πλάνας... (39c7–d1)

Here Timaeus says directly for the second time that time is the wanderings of the planets. Timaeus uses the strong verb ἴσασιν ("they know"), so he is saying that

<sup>45</sup>More generously, I think Timaeus could also agree that the past consists of all events that have happened at the same time as the motions in the heavens that took place prior to the present.

<sup>46</sup>This definition might seem to rest on a Newtonian view of time, and thus to undermine my claim: how can the future consist of motions that take place *after* the present, if Timaeus denies that there is any such thing as *after* that exists independently? But we can give a reductionist account of 'before' and 'after' if we are careful not to carelessly invoke Newtonian time. Briefly, the motions in the heavens allow us, if we take advantage of them, to set up a dating system using numbers. It is then easy to define past and future as events that happen at an earlier or later date than whatever happens to be the present.

<sup>47</sup>Wagner points out Greek writers typically speak of time as consisting of past and future — not of past, present and future as we do. (Wagner 2008, p. 73)

someone might, at least in principle, come to know this fact.<sup>48</sup>

We also have to consider the phrase *ὥς ἔπος εἰπεῖν*, “in a word,” in this declaration. It softens or hedges expressions it is applied to, so perhaps Timaeus is not asserting that time is the wanderings of the planets, but instead only that time is, “so to speak” those wanderings. On such a reading, Timaeus is not asserting the identity at all, but indicating that he is only adopting a picturesque expression to emphasize some other point — presumably something about the ignorance of most people with regard to planetary motions. But this is not the natural way of reading this sentence, since the softening phrase occurs with *οὐκ ἴσασιν* (“they do not know”). Had Timaeus wanted to hedge his claim about *time*, rather than about the ignorance of people, he would have indicated this more clearly by putting the softening phrase with the assertion about time.<sup>49</sup> Further, it is easy to see why Timaeus would soften his statement about peoples’ ignorance. For on his account, time consists of days, nights, months and years. And it would be absurd to claim that people are unaware that days, nights, months and years are the units by which we measure time: at least in that weak sense, everyone knows what time is. Timaeus’ softening claim makes sense, however, given that he is a reductionist. For this claim goes well beyond what most people are aware of about time and the planets, so he has reason for saying people are unaware that his view is correct.

The phrase *ὥς ἔπος εἰπεῖν* can apply to *either* the claim that *οὐκ ἴσασιν* (“they do not know”), or to the claim that *χρόνον ὄντα τὰς τούτων πλάνας* (“time is the

<sup>48</sup>He is not claiming to know it himself as he says it, for this would go beyond his own warnings that his speech is an *εἰκὼς μῦθος*, or “likely story.”

<sup>49</sup>Another reading would apply the softener to the entire statement as a whole. Then the translation would be, “in some sense, people do not know that time is the wanderings of the heavenly bodies.” This, however, is vague, and if we want to know what it means we will have to adopt one of the two readings considered above.

wanderings of these [bodies]”). If it applies to the former, the sense must be that people are “in a way,” or “more or less” ignorant of the fact he mentions. The meaning could then be that while people do notice the role played by the sun and moon in keeping time, they fail to notice that the other planets could be used in the same way.<sup>50</sup> But if this is the application of ὥς ἔπος εἶπεῖν, it cannot also apply to the claim that time is the motions of the planets. So on this reading Timaeus is stating flatly that time is the motions of the planets.

On the other hand, suppose that ὥς ἔπος εἶπεῖν applies to χρόνον ὄντα τὰς τούτων πλάνας. Now Timaeus is saying that time is “in a way” or “more or less” the motions of the planets. This suggests that he is only referring to the motions of the planets as measuring devices, not that they *are* time in the stronger sense I have been arguing for. But on this alternative, he must also mean that people *are* simply unaware that time has this status. This claim hardly seems plausible; how could Timaeus claim that no one knows that the sun and moon are used for reckoning periods of time? Because this claim would be very surprising, and because of the placement of ὥς ἔπος εἶπεῖν next to οὐκ ἴσασιν, it makes better sense to read the passage in the first way. Timaeus thus says that people are “more or less” ignorant of the nature of time, but what they are ignorant of is the fact that time is identical with the motions of the planets.

We have seen that Timaeus is a reductionist about time, and have also indicated at certain points how my reading is preferable to its main competitor, the Newtonian view. I next indicate how Timaeus’ claims stand in relation to contemporary discussions of time. Now Timaeus says far too little to map his views about

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<sup>50</sup>These readings are, however, not defended by their authors, only suggested: Cornford (1937, p. 116), Taylor (1928, pp. 213–214 ad 39d1), Archer-Hind (1888, p. 129 ad 14).



time onto current debates with much precision. My goal is thus the limited one of showing that Timaeus is some kind of reductionist, denying the existence of Newtonian time. The first step is to explain what these terms mean.

## Contemporary Philosophy of Time

I shall adopt the terminology used by Newton-Smith for describing positions on the reality of time, with one modification. He describes two important positions on the ontology of time, thus:

*The Ontological Thesis of Reductionism:* All assertions involving reference to time or temporal items can be analysed in terms of assertions not involving such reference but involving instead reference only to things in time and to the temporal relations between things in time.

*The Ontological Thesis of [Newtonianism]:* The existence of temporal items is ontologically independent of the existence of things in time. Temporal relations between things in time hold in virtue of temporal relations holding between the times at which the things in time occur.<sup>51</sup>

I have replaced Newton-Smith's name for the second position. He calls it "Platonism," intending to refer to the Cambridge neo-Platonists, whereas this is precisely the position Plato rejects.<sup>52</sup> So I shall call this thesis Newtonianism, since Newton gives the best-known version:

Absolute, True, and Mathematical Time, of itself, and from its own nature flows equably without regard to any thing external, and by another name is called Duration...<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Newton-Smith (1980, pp. 9–10)

<sup>52</sup>Newton-Smith (1980, p. 7) This unfortunate terminology is followed by Markosian (Winter 2010).

<sup>53</sup>Newton (1729, p. 9)

These theses express roughly what I take Timaeus to endorse and reject, respectively. But they should not be pressed too hard: Timaeus says nothing, of course, about translating claims about temporal items into equivalent sentences involving only things in time and their temporal relations. Even this much goes far beyond what Timaeus says. The key point of opposition between the two theses, which is also at issue in Timaeus' speech, is the question of the existence of "temporal items" in their own right.

Newton-Smith describes temporal items by opposing them to "the things in time":

The term 'things in time' will be used as a label to cover all types of item that are both in time and involve change. Thus, among the things in time are events, changes, processes, occurrences, happenings, incidents and so on...

*Prima facie* there is not just the ordered history system but also the times (moments, instants, intervals, etc.) at which the things in time occur. By *temporal item* I will mean things of this ilk which are ordered in a certain manner.<sup>54</sup>

Following this terminology, the question at issue for our reading of the *Timaeus* becomes: are there, in addition to the things in time, also temporal items? Timaeus, as we have already seen, denies that there are.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Newton-Smith (1980, pp. 5–6)

<sup>55</sup>I will not make use of another way of describing positions in the philosophy of time, one which is more prevalent than the terms I will use here. This is to describe positions following McTaggart's terminology of A-series and B-series. When events are ordered by the A-series, each event takes on successively different temporal properties: it begins by being *future*, then becomes *present*, and finally becomes *past*. On the B-series, on the other hand, each event retains the same properties at all times: if my eating a sandwich occurs *earlier than* my eating an apple, then this relation will hold permanently, no matter whether the pair of events is in the future, occurring at present, or has already happened. For these reasons, the two series are typically described as "tensed" and "tenseless" theories of time. Advocates of the B-series are thought to claim that the passage of

## Two Questions We Can Ignore

Before giving further arguments about how to read Timaeus' claims, let me mention two controversies we can leave aside. The first is the debate over whether the creation story in the *Timaeus* is meant literally or metaphorically. One argument for the figurative reading is that if the story were literal, a contradiction would ensue from supposing that there was some "time" before time was created.<sup>56</sup> We need not take up this issue because both positions are compatible with my claim that Timaeus thinks time is nothing but the motions of the planets. If the creation story is metaphorical, then time has always existed, meaning that the planets' motions have always existed. If the creation story is literal, then time came into being along with the planets. Time, for Timaeus, is nothing but the motions of the planets — there are no temporal items in addition to these motions, and this claim is independent of the claim that time had a literal beginning. That is, deciding whether the creation account is literal or metaphorical will not help decide whether Timaeus is a reductionist or a Newtonian about time. So we need not concern ourselves here about the status of the creation story.

A second controversy that we need not enter is the question whether Plato (or

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time is an illusion, since the real temporal relations that exist never change. So in some sense the A-series corresponds better with the Newtonian view, and the B-series corresponds better with the reductionist view. But these correspondences may not go very deep. Advocates of the B-series, for example, do not usually say that temporal items are not real: they simply wish to claim that the nature of temporal items is of one sort rather than another. So I take it that mapping McTaggart's terminology onto the labels I adopt from Newton-Smith is not straightforward. Since Newton-Smith's labels do a better job picking out the issue relevant to my reading of the *Timaeus*, I use his labels. I do not wish to commit myself to any claims about how these labels match McTaggart's terms, beyond the rough observation that reductionism is probably closer to the B-series than it is to the A-series. For a recent discussion of McTaggart's terms, see Oaklander (2008, pp. 13, 17–18).

<sup>56</sup>The controversy goes back to ancient times. For its recent episodes see Zeyl (2000, pp. xxii, xxiv, xliii with notes), Carone (2005, p. 33), Vlastos (1964, p. 409), Vlastos (1939, pp. 388–390).

the Greeks) thought of time as circular (or cyclical). Vlastos points out that the fact that Timaeus represents time as consisting of circular motions does not entail that he *conceives* of time as circular.<sup>57</sup> Nor is it immediately clear what would follow from conceiving of time as circular. It is sometimes thought that this would imply that the same events would occur each “time” the same time came around.<sup>58</sup> But this implication would only follow on *some* versions of the reductionist view, where the identities of individual temporal items are reduced *entirely* to the physical events taking place at those times. On views such as these, identical physical events would suffice to determine an identical time, so to say that the same time has arrived again implies — trivially — that the same events are happening again. But on Newtonian views, the same physical events could recur any number of times without making it the case that they would occur *at the same times*: time, on this view, marches blissfully on, oblivious to whatever is happening in space at each instant. We need not untangle this knot here. If Timaeus reduces temporal succession to the spatial motions of the planets, as I claim he does, this is compatible with his conceiving the time that results as either linear or circular.

Timaeus’ remarks on time are brief for such a deep and difficult subject, and his brevity leaves some inescapable ambiguity in his position. There are roughly three candidates for what Timaeus means to assert about time:

1. Time is identical with the motions of the planets (reductionism).
2. Time is *generated by*, and supervenient on, the motions of the planets.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Vlastos (1964, p. 409)

<sup>58</sup>For an example, see Zeyl (2000, p. xliii)

<sup>59</sup>Cf. Wagner: “Even in Plato’s case, however, there may be a confusion between time as something generated by the Heavens, and time (as Plato himself had at first asserted at the outset of his account of time [*Tim.* 37e]) as equated with the Heavens, or Heavenly motions, themselves.”

3. Time is independent of the motions of the planets; those motions amount (merely) to a giant clock which is able to measure time (Newtonianism).

View 1 is reductionism, since it claims that time is identical with certain physical motions, and does not exist independently of those motions. View 2 is a sort of compromise, and in the form given here is insufficiently spelled out. In order to differ from reductionism, View 2 will need to say something about what time *is*, such that it differs from the physical motions that generate it (View 1), and also such that it is not something independent of those motions (View 3). Since Timaeus says nothing to address either side of this dilemma, he cannot hold View 2. So while View 2 would be an interesting and, as far as I can see, viable option for philosophers who wish to defend it, the only candidates for reading Timaeus' account are Views 1 and 3. View 3 is the Newtonian position, according to which there are ordered temporal items existing independently of physical items.

We can now appreciate a simple and decisive reason for adopting View 1 over View 3: Newtonian time would be something at once *invisible*, *changing*, and *soulless*. Timaeus' (and Plato's) metaphysics has no room for this conjunction of properties.<sup>60</sup> Timaeus locates change within the visible world, and also within souls, which are invisible.<sup>61</sup> But apart from souls, Timaeus recognizes only two other kinds of thing that are invisible, namely the Forms and the receptacle. The Forms,

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(Wagner 2008, p. 119)

<sup>60</sup>Note that Newtonian time will be something changing whether we prefer the A-series or the B-series. On the A-series view, each instant changes its properties from future to present to past; on the B-series, instants retain their properties of being earlier than or later than other instants, but some sort of change will be required to account for the apparent fact that not all times are present simultaneously. On either view, the time series will have some property or properties that change.

<sup>61</sup>Timaeus distinguishes our visible world from the invisible/intelligible world (at 28b7, 29b3–c3, 30c7–d1, 39e1, 48e4–49a1, 51b7–c5, 92c5–9).

of course, are immune to change, so time is not a Form or a set of Forms. There is no possibility of the receptacle's being identical (in whole or in part) with time. First, the receptacle is described as either space or matter, but never in any way suggesting it is time. Second, the receptacle is said to lack any determinate properties, but the most salient characteristic of time is its regularity. The receptacle is also said to lack qualities of its own, and to be in "disorderly" motion when considered on its own. Neither description fits the concept of temporal succession, which both has qualities (transitivity, asymmetry, and irreflexivity), and is orderly in virtue of those qualities.

Finally, Timaeus never suggests that time could be identical with some soul (nor is it even clear what such a suggestion would mean). Since time fits none of these invisible kinds, to attribute the Newtonian position to Timaeus is to invent a new, invisible member of his ontology. But Timaeus himself says explicitly (48e–49a) that his ontology contains three kinds: one that is changeless, a second that is changing, and the third, which is the receptacle. Time is not changeless and is not the receptacle; it follows that time is changing. The set of changing things consists of visible items and souls. Time is not a soul, so it follows that time is something visible. And this fits what Timaeus says, which is that time is the motions of the heavenly bodies.

On the other hand, Timaeus claims that what is visible changes, so if time is visible it must change. This fits Timaeus' pronouncement that time is identical with the movements of the planets.

Reading Timaeus as a reductionist is not a new position. But those who have endorsed the reductionist reading have merely summarized the view, without

showing how it follows from what *Timaeus* says. So I hope to have added both specificity and new arguments to the grounds for this reading.

## Endorsements

Vlastos at one point agreed with this reading: “If Aristotle takes the heavenly revolutions as a necessary condition of time, the *Timaeus* seems to identify them with time.”<sup>62</sup> He later qualified this view, but the movement amounted to a change from View 1 to View 2; View 3 he considered obviously false.<sup>63</sup> Wagner has also recently endorsed View 1:

Why should we suppose that the natural universe, just by keeping track of its own processes and movements, thereby keeps track of time? The answer, for Plato, seems clear: Time’s “parts” are nothing other than the Heavenly bodies’ motions; and time surely is nothing other than its own parts.<sup>64</sup>

Taylor, too, denies the Newtonian characterization of *Timaeus*’ theory:

The point is that time is not something existing before or after or besides the events which make up the life of nature, a sort of frame into which the events are put, which might still be something with a structure of its own, if there were no events to fill it. It is itself a character of the events, or rather an expression of *the* most universal character

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<sup>62</sup>Vlastos (1939, p. 388). I will introduce below most of the evidence for this reading that Vlastos cites here.

<sup>63</sup>Vlastos (1964, p. 410)

<sup>64</sup>Wagner (2008, p. 119). Archer-Hind does not seem to see the issue that I am focusing on; he writes sometimes as if temporal flow and the planets are independent of one another, at other times as if temporal flow depends on the existence of the physical universe in general. See e.g. Archer-Hind (1888, pp. 122 ad 38e–39e, et ad 1, 129 ad 14).

of nature, its 'passage'. Fully thought out this implies a thoroughgoing 'relativist' theory of time such that an empty time, a time without events, like that which Newton is rightly or wrongly credited with asserting, is a phrase without meaning.<sup>65</sup>

Taylor's most concise statement on Timaeus' view of time is also worth quoting:

There was a question whether Plato means that time actually *is* uniform movement or only that it is measured by such movement...It seems to me...that the *language* of Timaeus plainly *identifies* time with the uniform movement of a planet.<sup>66</sup>

Reductionism about time is counterintuitive, but its motivation is easy to see.<sup>67</sup> All measurements of time consist of a comparison of one state of affairs with another, where at least one of the states involved is (in some sense) a clock. Clocks in this sense are regular, repetitive motions that have (or can have) numbers assigned to them. These motions can be nearly anything that is sufficiently regular, repetitive, and observable, from the motions of the sun or other heavenly bodies to the vibrations of atoms.<sup>68</sup> It is easy to lose sight of the fact that all "measurements" of time have this form, and to suppose that we are measuring something else — an abstract, non-physical "flow" of something that exists independently of physical items. But if we consider how these measurements are carried out and validated,

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<sup>65</sup>Taylor (1928, p. 188 ad 37e1–3). In a previous note, Taylor seems to ascribe the Newtonian view to Timaeus. But reading both notes together makes it clear that what he is attributing to Timaeus is only the part of Newton's view which claims that time advances uniformly, as the series of integers does.

<sup>66</sup>Taylor (1928, p. 191)

<sup>67</sup>Newton-Smith (1980, p. 51)

<sup>68</sup>The notion of "regularity" might seem circular here: how can a motion be described as "regular" except by reference to uniform, stable time-flow? But "regularity" here need only mean that a motion appears regular by comparison with other motions. Thus there is no vicious circle. For further discussion of this problem see Wagner (2008, pp. 180–187), Newton-Smith (1980, pp. 156–158).



it is clear that we have no contact with time as an object of our senses in the way that we have contact with trees, tables, or lions.<sup>69</sup> Thus the reductionist position is at least *prima facie* plausible; it is not in conflict with any obvious fact one could point to.<sup>70</sup>

Newton-Smith summarizes the reductionist case thus:

In developing his case the reductionist places great stress on the fact that whenever we have occasion to talk about some particular temporal item we identify it by citing some event which in fact occurred at that temporal item. For example, I might single out some moment as the moment I last turned a page of this book. Of course, we cannot equate the moment with that event. For we want to say that that moment is, say, the same moment as the moment you dropped your pen. As the same moment may have different identifying events the moment cannot be some one of these events. However, we can form the collection of all events simultaneous with any particular event used in identifying the moment. This collection, the reductionist claims, just is the moment...Clearly this is a most attractive project.<sup>71</sup>

I take Timaeus' position to be just what Newton-Smith describes here, with one exception. Rather than identifying moments with enormous sets of events, Timaeus prefers to identify them with a very limited set of events, namely the motions of the heavenly bodies. As a practical proposal, this has clear advantages. Newton-Smith's more democratic but unwieldy sets of events would not be usable unless one adopted something very much like Timaeus' identification of time with a much more limited set of motions. Moreover, Timaeus has available a strong defense of his choice of reference-motions. This is that it would be nonsense to talk

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<sup>69</sup>For a more detailed discussion of reasons favoring reductionism about time, see Wagner (2008, Chapter 1, pp. 19–41).

<sup>70</sup>The early Vlastos agrees with the reading I give here (1939, p. 387 and n. 2).

<sup>71</sup>Newton-Smith (1980, pp. 6–7)

about “time” unless we define it using something regular. Newton-Smith’s sets of events are more democratic, but would also make time unpredictable and irregular. Since, according to Timaeus, time was created with the purpose of making the universe more like the eternal, and also in order to allow humans to appreciate this order and move closer to the eternal, given these concerns, Newton-Smith’s proposal is a non-starter. Timaeus thus succeeds in defining time both so as to make it regular and useful, but also in ridding himself of a potential extra entity, one which would have violated his metaphysical bias against changing, invisible and soulless entities.

Aristotle mentions three theories when he considers “the traditional accounts” of time:

- (1) Some assert that it is the movement of the whole (2) others that it is the sphere itself. (*Physics* IV.10 218a33)
- (3) But as time is most usually supposed to be motion and a certain change, we must consider this view. (*Physics* IV.10 218b9–10)<sup>72</sup>

None of these three states Timaeus’ view precisely, since he claims that time is the movement of the heavenly bodies. This is neither the movement of the whole, nor is it the sphere itself (apart from its movement), nor finally is it motion and a certain change.<sup>73</sup> Timaeus’ claims correspond best to some combination of the

<sup>72</sup>218a33: οἱ μὲν γὰρ τὴν τοῦ ὅλου κίνησιν εἶναι φασιν, οἱ δὲ τὴν σφαῖραν αὐτήν. 218b9–10: ἐπεὶ δὲ δοκεῖ μάλιστα κίνησις εἶναι καὶ μεταβολὴ τις ὁ χρόνος, τοῦτ’ ἂν εἴη σκεπτέον. (Barnes’ translation, slightly modified; the numbering is, of course, mine.)

<sup>73</sup>Pace Wagner (2008, pp. 167 et passim Chapter Five (pp. 167–187)). He writes, “The first two harken to Plato’s account...Distinguishing these two may reflect Aristotle’s recognition of this ambiguity in Plato’s own account in his *Timaeus*. Or, Aristotle may have in mind differing ways others in the Academy understood Plato.” But in fact Aristotle dismisses the second theory as “too naïve for it to be worth while to consider the impossibilities implied in it.” Nor does the second theory

first and third views. Perhaps Aristotle's third view is meant to characterize a whole family of theories, all those according to which time is or depends on *any* motion or change. If this is so, Timaeus' view falls within this genus, and Aristotle intends to refute it along with other members of the genus when he argues that time is not motion.

The important point is that Aristotle recognized the claim that time is motion as what was "most usually supposed" by his predecessors. He denies the thesis, but does not call it naïve or incredible; he refutes it by argument (*Physics* IV.10 218b10–20). It is likely, but by no means certain, that Aristotle is referring to the *Timaeus*, among other sources, when he identifies this view.<sup>74</sup> But no matter: that he takes it seriously is enough to show that it was possible to entertain this view seriously in Plato's time.

We have seen so far that the reductionist view is sufficiently coherent to have been held by some famous philosophers of the past, and continues to have adherents. We have also seen that the text supports a reductionist reading. It remains to respond to a recent and spirited defense of the Newtonian reading by Richard

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sound at all like what Timaeus says. Wagner adds a careful consideration of how Aristotle's first and third theories may correspond to Plato's. Coope also takes Aristotle to refer to the *Timaeus* here (2005, p. 32). Other ancient and modern writers also read the *Timaeus* this way: The spurious *Definitiones* include: "Χρόνος ἡλίου κίνησις, μέτρον φορᾶς" ("Time: motion of the sun, a measure of motion," 411b3); Simplicius reports that Plato, Eudemos, Theophrastus and Alexander all considered time to be "τὴν τοῦ ὅλου κίνησιν καὶ περιφορὰν τὸν χρόνον εἶναι φασιν," "they say that time is the motion and revolution of the whole," (Simplicius 1882, 1895, pp. 17–19). Aëtius agrees: "(Πλάτων) οὐσίαν δὲ χρόνου τὴν οὐρανοῦ κίνησιν," "Plato [says that] the being of time is the motion of the heavens." (Aëtius 1879, pp. 11–12). For further ancient references and concurrent opinion on this point, see Taylor (1928, pp. 190–191). Note that while all these authors disagree with me over how, *precisely*, to read what Timaeus says, all these sources support my contention that identifying time with the motion of the heavens was a respectable and plausible view to hold in the ancient world, as was attributing this view to Plato.

<sup>74</sup>On the other hand, Plotinus does not seem to read Plato as having identified time with the motions of the planets (Wagner 2008, p. 275). But Aristotle's testimony is weightier on this question.

Mohr.

## Objections

Mohr

Mohr holds that what Timaeus describes is the building of a giant cosmic clock, but no more — in particular, not the creation of temporal succession itself.<sup>75</sup> On his view, the workings of the clock are motions, but time itself — that is, the sequence of temporal items — is not characterized as a motion by Timaeus. Mohr reads Timaeus as a Newtonian, since he attributes to Timaeus the view that time is both real and unaffected by physical events. These assumptions allow him to claim that temporal succession existed prior to the construction of the clock; the only change effected by the clock was that temporal succession could then be measured. I agree with Mohr that, according to Timaeus, the Demiurge creates a giant clock; we disagree on the claim that this is *all* the Demiurge does. I hold, instead, that in building this clock the Demiurge also creates time.

Mohr distinguishes three senses of “time”: (1) what is measurable, i.e. the temporal succession itself;<sup>76</sup> (2) what measures the temporal succession, i.e. a clock or clock-like device; (3) a measurement actually taken, e.g. “three days” or “seven minutes.” He claims that those who think Timaeus is a reductionist are confusing the first and second senses. Since I have already given the positive evidence favoring my view, I will move quickly through Mohr’s arguments.

On Mohr’s view, when Timaeus calls days, nights, months and years “parts

<sup>75</sup>Mohr (2005, pp. 51–80). For discussion of the notion of “clock,” see above, page 130.

<sup>76</sup>“Temporal succession” is Mohr’s term. An equivalent would, I think, be “the sequence of temporal items, plus regular progression through that sequence.”

of time,” he means they are parts of the celestial clock.<sup>77</sup> This much is compatible with reductionism: days, nights, etc. are the phenomena of which time consists; they are parts of time. And since Timaeus holds that the phenomena by which we measure time are identical with time itself, it makes sense on his view to say that days, nights, etc. are both parts of the celestial clock and parts of time. Mohr, however, must add that days, nights, and the other units only *measure* the phenomenon that time actually is. But Mohr cannot point to any statement of Timaeus’ that says this or suggests it.

Again, the claim that “*was* and *will be* are forms of time that have come to be” is difficult for a Newtonian account. Since *was* and *will be* have come to be, Mohr must hold that they are either identical with the clock that the Demiurge creates, or parts of that clock, or else have come into being as a result of the creation of that clock. For the temporal succession itself (according to Mohr) has *not* come to be. The best reading for Mohr’s view, then, is this. Since *was* and *will be* are expressed in Greek with the τὸ + finite verb construction, and this construction has already been used twice to refer to expressions using past and future tenses, Mohr can take this third instance also to refer to linguistic expressions referring to the past or future. And Mohr can explain that these are “forms of time” in that they are forms of reference to past and future times. This much is open to Mohr. But he is not able to read the statement in the most natural way, as saying that the past and future *themselves* are forms, or kinds, of time.

Now let us focus on one of the crucial sentences for my reading, the one in which Timaeus says, “*Was* and *will be* are properly said about the becoming that

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<sup>77</sup>Mohr (2005, p. 57)

passes in time, for these two are motions.”<sup>78</sup> Here Timaeus calls the past and future motions *tout court*, and this too is more easily understood as a metaphysical claim about temporal succession than about a clock or the measurements of a clock. Mohr’s only comment on this statement is to claim that Timaeus says this “casually or elliptically,” and that Timaeus speaks more accurately a few lines farther, when he says, “none of the characteristics that becoming has bestowed upon the things that are borne about in the realm of perception are appropriate to [being]” (38a5–6). Here, according to Mohr, past and future are described as properties rather than motions.<sup>79</sup> But this goes beyond what the text says. The text says merely that nothing bestowed on sensible things by becoming pertains to changeless being — in particular, it does not say or imply that there is a distinction between “was” and “will be” on one hand, and properties or characteristics on the other. The word that Mohr takes as “properties” is ὅσα (38a6), literally “as many things as.” There are two problems with Mohr’s reading here. First, ὅσα is vague in Greek; taking it to mean “properties” imports much more specificity and even a technical sense. There is no evidence that Timaeus intends anything so specific. Second, even if we accept the interpretation that makes ὅσα into “properties,” it remains to show that Timaeus is thinking of properties as somehow opposed to “was” and “will be.” The text is compatible with thinking that Timaeus is describing the past and future as both motions and properties; on this reading, there is nothing to decide whether *Timaeus* thinks either description is privileged.

Finally, Mohr himself slips out of his Newtonian reading when he comments

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<sup>78</sup>τὸ δὲ ἦν τό τ’ ἔσται περὶ τὴν ἐν χρόνῳ γένεσιν ἰοῦσαν πρέπει λέγεσθαι — κινήσεις γάρ ἐστων, *Timaeus* 38a1–2

<sup>79</sup>Mohr (2005, p. 70)

on this passage:

...it turns out that past, present and future (38a4-5) are not viewed as motions but as properties which supervene on motions: they are things “which becoming attaches to sensible movings” (38a6). The past, future, and even the present, on this fuller account, are those temporal properties which we describe in judgments of measure...<sup>80</sup>

If the past and future *supervene* on motions, then there is no such thing as “temporal succession” in the absence of those motions. Here the past and future are said to depend on (since they co-vary with) the motions of the heavenly bodies. This contradicts Mohr’s supposition that time must have existed prior to the creation of the cosmic clock. Again, Mohr’s position does not match the text: for Mohr to hold both that Newtonian time existed before the creation of the universe, and that time supervenes on motion, he must hold that time supervenes on motions that existed before the creation of the universe. It follows that time does not depend on orderly motions, but only on any motion at all, even the disorderly state of the pre-universe. But this is just what Timaeus denies when he says that time came into being with the heavens.

Finally, Timaeus does not say that the clock merely measures the temporal succession; he says that it is time, and that almost no one is aware of this (*Timaeus* 39c7-d1: ὥστε ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν οὐκ ἴσασιν χρόνον ὄντα τὰς τούτων πλάνας...). The claim that people fail to notice what time is squares more easily with the reductionist reading; it is hard to see why Timaeus would claim that people have failed to notice that we use the sun and moon to mark off days, months and years.

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<sup>80</sup>Mohr (2005, p. 70)

Mohr points out that “the Demiurge...does not produce events *simpliciter* or produce them as having transitive, asymmetrical, irreflexive relations.”<sup>81</sup> It is not clear what Mohr intends by the first half of this disjunction, but it is worth pointing out that the existence of events may be necessary, but is not sufficient for the existence of time.<sup>82</sup> Time, or temporal succession, is (or is manifested as) a certain kind of ordering among events. Mohr identifies three properties as making up the temporal succession: transitivity, asymmetry, and irreflexivity.<sup>83</sup>

Mohr thinks it would be self-contradictory to claim that there were events in the pre-cosmos but no temporal succession; therefore, since *Timaeus* describes events in the pre-cosmos, there must have been temporal succession as well. As evidence for events in the pre-cosmos, Mohr cites 30a, 50b6 (there were bodies in the pre-cosmos), 52d–53c, and 52e1–2. “The emphasis of the description is on diversity of appearance and plurality of motions...”<sup>84</sup> *Timaeus* 52d–53c, for example, describes the shaking of the receptacle and the resultant separation of the four kinds into separate regions.

But the presence of events does not entail temporal succession. Remove any or all of the three properties of temporal succession, and the result will not be describable as “time” in the same sense in which we now use the word. So, for example, bodies and events might be ordered in a succession that is asymmetric

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<sup>81</sup>Mohr (2005, p. 58). This triad of properties is also mentioned by Vlastos (1964, p. 414).

<sup>82</sup>Newton-Smith expresses much the same idea: “For there is no ground for accepting Leibniz’s implicit claim that time must be measurable. There might well be world in which periods of time filled with events could not be measured at all, either directly or indirectly. Things might be so chaotic that no self-congruent sequence of events could be identified to serve as the basis of a measurement system, in which case...time would be unmeasurable.” (1980, p. 17)

<sup>83</sup>Mohr (2005, p. 59)

<sup>84</sup>Mohr (2005, p. 58)



and irreflexive, but also intransitive.<sup>85</sup> There is nothing self-contradictory — or even paradoxical — about such an arrangement; it merely seems strange because that is not how we experience time. So granting that Timaeus refers to identifiable events, and posits some order amongst them, it does not follow that he presupposes time in our sense. This fact might do a better job of accounting for Timaeus' statement at the beginning of his speech (30a) that the god found "all that was visible — not at rest but in discordant and disorderly motion..." This description might refer to a non-standard temporal succession as well as to a lack of purpose or order in the arrangements of bodies. But the best reading is that the disorder consists of the fact that there were no repetitive, orderly motions by which the others could be kept track of.<sup>86</sup> Regular periods of some sort, which make it possible to keep track of how many such periods have passed between one event and another is, in Timaeus' view, what time is. If there is no way of doing this, there is no time.

Zeyl

Zeyl also raises problems about the idea of times having a beginning in his commentary:

Things that come to be, come to be "in" time. If time itself came to be,

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<sup>85</sup>Vlastos makes a similar distinction (1964, pp. 410–412). Similarly, Newton-Smith gives seven axia that define the "standard topology," that is, the structure time has if it resembles a straight line going to infinity in both directions. Remove one or more of these axia, and the result will no longer be what we ordinarily mean by "time" (1980, p. 52). This claim could also be put in terms of recent scientific theories as the claim that any solution of the field equations for General Relativity represents a possible situation, and (again) there are many such solutions for which "time" in our sense does not obtain.

<sup>86</sup>Vlastos suggests roughly the same thing (1939, p. 390).

what did it come to be “in”? A higher-order time?<sup>87</sup>

The issue Zeyl indicates is a deep philosophical challenge. But the fact that it is a deep point gives it *less* weight if used to challenge my reading of the *Timaeus*. For it is plausible that there are deep philosophical issues that Timaeus (and Plato) did not notice, or else, if he did notice them, did not succeed in resolving. It would be less plausible to claim that Timaeus (and Plato) either failed to notice or failed to resolve some issue that is neither deep nor difficult. Since this is a deep issue, it cannot be used to show that Timaeus (or Plato) was not a reductionist.

Timaeus has a theory on which both all qualitative changes occurring in the visible world, and also all temporal changes, are really nothing but spatial motions. This is a bold and striking attempt to give a unified explanation for a very diverse set of phenomena. I now turn to the receptacle, which provides some explanation of the space in which spatial change occurs.

## 2.5 The Receptacle

We have now seen that Timaeus advances a general theory of change, claiming that all change is spatial motion. Its most interesting aspects deal with time and the receptacle, but these are precisely its most tantalizingly brief and obscure parts. The existence of this theory of change may also contribute to the debate over the nature of the “receptacle” that Timaeus introduces and briefly discusses (47e–53c).

My goals in this section are very limited, as the debate over the receptacle is

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<sup>87</sup>Zeyl (2000, p. xliii)

too involved to enter here. I will introduce an argument that bears on the receptacle's nature, and which so far as I know has not previously been recognized as relevant. Introducing this new argument will not decide the question, of course. In particular, I will not attempt here to decide how much weight to give the new argument compared with others already extant; I will do little more than explain the argument and how, taken by itself, it bears on the nature of the receptacle.

Since Timaeus advances a position according to which all change consists of spatial motion, it follows that to explain change one has to explain spatial motion. It seems likely that the receptacle is introduced to answer some problem(s) about change. What problem this is, is far from clear. But by reducing all forms of change to spatial motion, the theory has reduced the problem of change to the problem of spatial motion. It seems likely that Timaeus considers this an advantage, since as he introduces the receptacle, he refers to economy as one of the main advantages in his account of the universe (49a).<sup>88</sup>

Four types of theory have been advanced about the nature of the receptacle.<sup>89</sup> Roughly, the receptacle has been thought to be (1) matter,<sup>90</sup> (2) space,<sup>91</sup> (3) both,<sup>92</sup> or (4) neither.<sup>93</sup> If the receptacle has the connections I have alleged with the the-

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<sup>88</sup>Brisson also notes the extreme economy of Timaeus' account: "We are thus faced with a brutal and radical compression or reduction of reality's extreme complexity. On every scale, from the domain of microscopic realities invisible to the naked eye to the gigantic objects considered by astronomy, the only explanation of observable phenomena lies within the elementary components, which all obey the same mathematical laws." (2003, p. 190).

<sup>89</sup>For detailed descriptions of these types, see Miller (2003, Chapter I, pp. 19–36). The basic dichotomy of the dispute is also discussed by Algra (1995, p. 72 ff.).

<sup>90</sup>This view has had few recent advocates, but was common in antiquity beginning with Aristotle. For references see Miller (2003, pp. 20–24), Brisson (2003, pp. 113, 117, 122).

<sup>91</sup>Advocates include Mohr (2005, p. 84), Johansen (2004, Chapter 6, pp. 117–136), Robinson (2004, p. 12), Brisson (1994, p. 263), Cornford (1937, p. 159), Taylor (1928, pp. 312–313).

<sup>92</sup>Advocates include Algra (1995, pp. 89–92), although he also claims the account is incoherent (p. 78).

<sup>93</sup>We might classify here those who claim the account is incoherent: Sayre (2003), Algra (1995,

ories of physical, chemical, biological and temporal change in the *Timaeus*, and these theories have the common goal of reducing their respective types of change to spatial motion, then this makes it more likely that the receptacle is meant to account for spatial motion. This consideration obviously tells in favor of theories identifying the receptacle with space. It is silent, however, about the concept of matter, so that we cannot judge at this stage whether this argument ultimately tells in favor of type 2 theories or type 3 theories.<sup>94</sup> But the argument suggests that the main purpose of the receptacle is to account for space.

Thomas Johansen has made a similar argument about the receptacle; the main difference in our positions is that I have claimed that the theory of change applies to a wider range of phenomena than he recognizes. But he too draws the lesson from the intertransformations of triangles, that the receptacle must be primarily space:

...I have argued that the receptacle is presented as *chôra* primarily because of a spatial notion of coming-into-being. Coming-into-being is understood in terms of bodies, phenomenal or real, moving in and out of places. *Chôra* plays a double role in these transformations. Understood as a count noun, it is the particular places or spaces which bodies move to and from. Understood as a mass noun, *chôra* is generic place or space which bodies move to and from.<sup>95</sup>

Now if change has been reduced to spatial motion, then Timaeus may wish to use the receptacle to explain something relevant to both space *and* motion. The argument should say, then, that the receptacle seems to be space, since space is the

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pp. 93–106).

<sup>94</sup>Johansen adopts the same approach on this logical point (2004, p. 118).

<sup>95</sup>Johansen (2004, p. 118)

first element of “spatial motion.” It is less clear whether it should also say that the receptacle has any additional properties that would help account for motion, or whether it should hold that space on its own already (somehow) accounts for motion.

Arriving at a clear view of what the receptacle is quickly raises deep and extremely difficult problems. Many of these arise from trying to clarify the concepts “matter” and “space.” For Plato seems to use these concepts, and expressions implying them, in a non-technical way in the *Timaeus*.<sup>96</sup> But the non-technical or common concepts are vague, so claims in which they occur are also rendered vague. Attempts to render them precise are slippery: while common-sense often takes “matter” and “space” to be mutually exclusive notions, more precise versions may well be compatible.<sup>97</sup> So there are some versions of the concept “matter” which function the way “space” is thought to function (i.e., thought to function *either* by common sense, *or* by more precise concepts of “space”), and *vice versa*. Given these interpretations, one cannot claim — without considerable exegesis — that the receptacle “is space,” “is matter,” “is space and not matter,” and so on, because by themselves such claims might mean almost anything.

Although I will not try to give any general solution to these problems here, I will respond to two charges recently laid against the spatial interpretation by Algra. If either claim stands, then the view I advocate is ruled out from the start. So I will adopt the limited goal of refuting these two attacks.

The first claim is that the “space-only” view of the receptacle is unable to produce any strong reason for not reading certain statements in the receptacle pas-

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<sup>96</sup>Noted by Algra (1995, p. 118).

<sup>97</sup>Noted by Algra (1995, p. 83).

sage which make it sound (more) like matter (than it does like space).

Now the spatial reading of the receptacle can point to the fact that Timaeus calls it space (χώρα) explicitly (52a8, b4, 52d3, and possibly 53a6), while there is no similar use of any term that can be translated as “matter.”<sup>98</sup> The most important passages that suggest the receptacle is, or is also, matter are the following:

Suppose you were molding gold into every shape there is, going on nonstop remolding one shape into the next. If someone then were to point at one of them and ask you, “What is it?,” your safest answer by far, with respect to truth, would be to say, “gold,” but never “triangle” or any of the other shapes that come to be in the gold, as though it is these, because they change even while you’re making the statement. (50a5–b4)

Its nature is to be available for anything to make its impression upon (ἐκμαγεῖτον γὰρ φύσει παντὶ κεῖται), and it is modified (κινούμενον), shaped, and reshaped by the things that enter it. These are the things that make it appear different at different times. (50c2–4)

...the most correct way to speak of it may well be this: the part of it that gets ignited appears on each occasion as fire, the dampened part as water, and parts as earth or air insofar as they receive the imitations of these. (51b3–6)

Each of these passages is most easily read as saying that the receptacle is something like prime matter, a stuff with no properties of its own that serves as a substrate for properties. The picture that emerges is like one common conception of Aristotle’s account of ordinary things as combinations of form and matter. The receptacle, on this view, would be something analogous to modeling clay or wax that can be molded into anything if the right properties are added to it.

Algra rightly points out that this kind of reading is easily applied to these passages. But he overstates the difficulty that this creates for the spatial view of the

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<sup>98</sup>Noted by Johansen (2004, p. 117).

receptacle:

...it would certainly need some arguing to prove that this is not what he [sc. Plato] tried to convey by metaphorical descriptions like *ekmageion* ('moulding stuff' or 'wax-tablet'), or *mêtêr* ('mother'), or the periphrastic *ex hou* occurring in the gold analogy. Especially the latter expression can hardly be taken otherwise than as referring to a material constituent.<sup>99</sup>

Algra overstates the case for the material reading here. For the passage says plainly and repeatedly that the receptacle is space (χώρα), while the sections that make it sound like matter are metaphorical, or are images meant to serve as analogies. But Algra gives both kinds of statement equal weight.

The passages that seem to point to a concept of matter are all metaphorical, so it requires argument to show that Timaeus' point in each (or in any) of them is that the receptacle is matter. After all, every analogy and metaphor includes many features that are not the point of the trope. To take one of these as essential is to misunderstand the trope.

The examples are all chosen to emphasize the fact that the receptacle cannot be identified with the properties it receives: in the first, the point is that we should call the golden triangle "gold" rather than "a triangle" because "gold" is the constant that underlies each of the shapes it receives. But it does not follow from this example that the gold represents matter here.<sup>100</sup> If we carry Timaeus' analogy farther, and ask of some real object before us what we should say it is, the answer

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<sup>99</sup>Algra (1995, p. 85)

<sup>100</sup>Mohr also makes this point (2005, p. 93). For further reasons that the gold analogy does not support a reading of the receptacle as matter, see Johansen (2004, p. 122 n. 8).

should be “the receptacle.”<sup>101</sup> Timaeus has not mentioned matter, and further, he *has* mentioned the receptacle. In order to answer “matter,” we would have to know in advance that the receptacle is matter; but this is precisely the question at issue.

The two passages cited above after the example of gold may seem harder to explain, for in these Timaeus says more directly that it is the receptacle *itself* that is “modified, shaped, and reshaped.” But again, it does not follow from these statements that the receptacle is matter. What follows is only the much weaker inference that, on the assumption that there must be matter somewhere in Timaeus’ physics, then since the receptacle is the most matter-like thing in his system, the receptacle must be playing this role. But whether Timaeus thinks he needs matter in his system is not at all clear. For one might also think that when he describes the receptacle as being “modified, shaped, and reshaped,” he attributes these processes to the receptacle precisely in order to avoid acknowledging any matter in his physics.<sup>102</sup>

In particular, Timaeus’ claim that the receptacle lacks any determinate properties may be sufficient to explain these descriptions. For if he had said that the receptacle merely contained the properties that objects have, he would have been guilty of attributing the determinate property of emptiness or spatiality to it. Timaeus’ approach seems analogous to negative theology: he attempts to say some-

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<sup>101</sup>Mohr makes the same point, i.e. that the answer to the same question outside the gold analogy would be ‘the receptacle’ (2005, p. 102).

<sup>102</sup>Algra, for example, cites as a common presupposition about matter the claim that “matter is corporeal,” and also denies that this claim is necessarily true (1995, p. 84). But he does not explain what this means, and I do not see how to make sense of it. What would the alternatives to this claim be? That it is incorporeal? It would be helpful, at the least, to spell out some of the claims that are supposed to follow from this. My point is just that without a clear concept of matter, it is hard to make progress in deciding whether Timaeus’ speech refers to or suggests such a thing.



thing about the receptacle, but also to deny any definite property that it begins to (seem to) have. His goal is to emphasize its indeterminacy, and thereby its receptivity — yet without claiming simply that it has the property of *being receptive*. For if it had this property, it would not be able to receive the opposite of this. And he wants the receptacle to receive all properties equally.

Algra's other claim about the viability of the spatial reading is that Plato has two modes of presentation of the receptacle — one like space, the other like matter — and that these are incompatible. The issue is that matter is inseparable from the object that is formed from it, while space is separable from an object moving through it.<sup>103</sup> Thus, even if one thinks the receptacle is both space and matter, one cannot think it is both separable and inseparable from objects.

However, if we accept the spatial reading of the receptacle proposed above, there will be no inconsistency on the question of whether the receptacle is separable from objects.

I think Algra is right to point out that two levels of explanation are involved in the receptacle passage, a metaphysical one and a physical one.<sup>104</sup> At the metaphysical level, it functions as something that instantiates properties from the Forms; at the physical level it functions as space through which bodies move. But I suggest that in dividing levels, Algra has absolved Timaeus from contradiction, although not from obscurity. Of course Timaeus does not succeed in showing how the receptacle is able to function in both ways relative to both roles it plays. But to see that it does play two roles helps to explain the source of the obscurity, as well as to show that the inconsistency is not incoherence.

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<sup>103</sup>For Algra's explanation of the problem see Algra (1995, pp. 93-102).

<sup>104</sup>Algra (1995, p. 102)

Timaeus thus wants to maintain his explanation of the world from two points of view. First, the theory of Forms continues in force, on which phenomenal things are images of the eternal Forms. Second, however, the properties and transformations of phenomenal things get a much more detailed explanation in the *Timaeus* than they have enjoyed before. Timaeus shows how all forms of phenomenal change are forms of spatial change, and he provides the receptacle/space as an explanation of what makes spatial change possible.

Another way of describing Timaeus' inconsistency may also be illuminating. The Form-theory describes how it is that objects have properties in a static way. This is to be expected, since the Forms do not move or change: no explanation using them as the *explanans* could account for change. At the same time, Timaeus' account also tells us that when an object comes to have a property, this is also due to spatial movements on the part of its constituent triangles.<sup>105</sup> These motions account for the facts that the object did not earlier have this property, that the object keeps the property for as long as it does, and that the object eventually loses the property. From this perspective, I suggest that the receptacle's contribution to the theory pertains more to explaining change than it does to explaining participation in a Form. Participation was always obscure, and it may be relevant that reading the receptacle as matter does not render it a bit clearer: this is evidence that Timaeus does not intend it to explain participation. Reading the receptacle as space, however, makes the rest of the theory of change clearer in that it explains why there is space in which movement can take place.

I will close this section with two suggestions about other facets of the recep-

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<sup>105</sup>The double aspect (i.e. describing phenomena as both static images and in flux) is noted for the gold analogy by Mohr (2005, pp. 101–102).

tacle theory.

First, why does Timaeus think he needs to introduce the receptacle at all? One answer, of course, is that it allows him to give much more detailed and powerful explanations of changes in the phenomenal realm. I suggest that at the metaphysical level, he may also think that if he leaves only the Forms and the images in his ontology, this may suggest that the images have being in their own right. For it is part of the theory of Forms that participants cannot get enough being from the Forms to make them independent or to exist in their own right. But while all (or most) individual visible things will eventually perish, the realm of the visible as a whole might be left looking permanent. How could it do that when it lacks the kind of being that keeps the Forms permanently in existence? This might suggest the usefulness of positing the third kind. Timaeus is able to say that it exists permanently: thus the visible things that come to be in it clearly do not have the kind of independent existence granted to the Forms. Nor even does the entire realm of the visible as a whole have existence in its own right.

Second, some of the strangeness of the receptacle may be accounted for by the fact that it cannot be identical with, or possess any property that is represented by a Form. As Timaeus points out, if it had any such property it would be unable to do a good job of receiving the opposite property. But there is a Form for every property; it follows that the receptacle must be (literally) Form-less, having no properties at all.<sup>106</sup> The one exception to this may be spatiality, if I am right that the receptacle is space. Further, the receptacle cannot have any of the properties

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<sup>106</sup>Even if there is not a Form for every property, it is still true that the receptacle cannot have any properties. For example, suppose there is no Form for ice because ice is just a combination of water and cold; then the receptacle cannot be watery or cold, and it follows that it cannot be icy either. So it cannot have any property, even those for which there is no Form.

that the Forms have generically, either: it cannot be changeless, for example. This may help account for the fact that Timaeus cannot give any simple description of it, and keeps changing the way he describes it as if he is dissatisfied with what he has said so far in his account. These constraints may make Timaeus guilty of giving an incoherent or contradictory account. But my concern at the moment is not to defend his account as consistent, but only to point out some constraints that may explain why the account turns out to have (roughly) the features it has.

## 2.6 An Objection

### The Unified Theory

I next discuss an objection to my reading of the Kinetic Theory, an objection denying that the theory succeeds in simplifying the ontology of the visible world down to the single property of spatial motion. The elemental theory shows that all properties except spatial motion are unreal, leaving spatial motion the *only* phenomenon in its ontology of the visible world. So, for example, the property *being wine* does not involve any essence of wine, if “essence” means something over and above having the right arrangement of ultimate constituent triangles. This theory allows Plato to claim that what it is to be wine is just to be a certain mixture of water and fire. Water, in turn, is just icosahedra, and an icosahedron is just a certain arrangement of a certain number of a certain kind of triangle. On this theory, then, complex properties in the visible world consist of nothing more than simpler spatial properties, freeing the theory of all entities, relations, and properties that cannot be reduced in this way. It is reductionist in the strong sense of

excising all putative properties from its ontology of the visible world except the one it treats as basic.

Consider now the conjunction of the Kinetic Theory and the claim found in the *Phaedrus* and *Laws*, that souls are the source of motion for everything else. That is, souls are both sources of their own spatial motions, and also sources of the spatial motions of visible items. I will call this the Unified Theory, since it combines the Kinetic Theory with the Self-Mover Theory.

On the Unified Theory, souls, by serving as sources of spatial motion for other items, also become sources of *all* the properties of visible items. Let us say, for the sake of terminological convenience, that souls are *directly* the source of spatial motions, and *indirectly* the source of other properties. So for example, whenever some liquid becomes wine, this is due to some water and some fire moving spatially so that the right mixture comes into being. The Unified Theory says that a soul (or souls) was the source of these spatial motions, having spatial motions of its own and transmitting them to the water and fire.<sup>107</sup> That soul, however, does not have the property of *being wine* within itself, and so cannot transmit *this* property to the water and fire.<sup>108</sup> It suffices that it transmits spatial motions, and those spatial motions result in the right mixture's coming into being.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup>I assume that it makes no difference whether the soul transmitted the motions directly to the water and fire, or only distally, via a chain of transmission that travelled among several entities before the motions were transferred to the water and fire. I see nothing in Timaeus' account that rules out either case.

<sup>108</sup>A further reason that souls *cannot* have properties like *being wine* within themselves: *being wine* means being a certain mixture of water and fire, and therefore being a certain mixture of triangles arranged in certain ways. But souls do not consist of triangles at all, and so are incapable of satisfying the conditions for being wine.

<sup>109</sup>Note that it makes no difference whether the souls *intended* to create wine or to do something completely different. The theory does not claim that souls always know the results that their transmission of spatial motions will bring about. Second, the case in which two or more souls each provide a source of spatial motions, and the combination of all these motions causes water and

### Objection: Of How Many Properties are Souls the Sources?

The objection says that the unified theory makes souls the source not just of spatial motions, but of every other property as well. If wine is just a certain mixture of water and fire, and these in turn are nothing but certain spatial arrangements, then souls are sources of everything required for something to *be wine*. That is, there is no property, entity, or relation that a thing needs in order to be wine, and of which souls are not the source. So souls should count as the source of *being wine* just as much as they are the source of spatial motion.

Insofar as the objection turns on a difficult metaphysical issue, namely what properties a reductionist theory is committed to recognizing, there is no need to argue here that Timaeus (or Plato) has the right analysis of the problem. If the objection succeeds, showing that the elemental theory is committed to making souls sources of every property, it is still the case that souls are only sources of all those properties in the sense that the elemental theory recognizes those properties at all. That is, since the theory holds that being wine is just having a certain spatial arrangement of ultimate constituent parts, then if souls are the source of the property *being wine*, this only means that they are the source of something's coming to have a certain spatial arrangement of ultimate constituent parts. Noth-

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fire to become wine, shows perhaps more clearly that the theory can dispense with essences or properties that reside within souls or within visible items. For if there were a property-instance like *being wine*, which could exist inside a soul and be transmitted to a visible thing, making it into wine, then if a group of souls each provided some of the motions necessary for bringing water and fire together to produce wine, presumably it would suffice for any one of those souls to transmit the property *being wine* to the mixture to make it wine. If the other souls transmitted the same property, it would be superfluous. Worse, it would seem that the spatial motions themselves might be superfluous too – if something has the property *being wine*, then it is wine, regardless of what arrangement its parts are in. So not only does Timaeus' elemental theory not need additional properties such as *being wine*, it would cause trouble to introduce them. Properties such as these reside among the Forms, and do all the work they need do from that location.

ing has been added to the description of what souls are or contain by adding the claim that they are, for example, sources of the property *being wine*. The objection therefore accomplishes less than it promised, showing only that if souls are sources of properties other than spatial motions, these properties have no independent status that the Unified Theory is forced to recognize. The Unified Theory is thus free to maintain that souls are the source of spatial motions, and that the visible world consists of spatial motions and nothing more.<sup>110</sup>

## 2.7 Conclusion

A plausible motivation for the Kinetic Theory is the Self-Mover Theory, that is, the claim that all changes are traceable back to a soul or souls. In the *Phaedo*, for example, Socrates claims that “the soul resembles the divine” (*Phaedo* 80a8) and “the nature of the divine is to rule and to lead...” (*Phaedo* 80a4). A version of the same claim survives to be repeated in the *Laws*:

Athenian: It's the soul, my good friend, that nearly everybody seems to have misunderstood, not realizing its nature and power...It is one of the first creations, born long before all physical things, and is the chief cause of all their alterations and transformations. (892a2–7, emphasis in Saunders' translation)

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<sup>110</sup>Perhaps the elemental theory also renders the relations between visible items and Forms somewhat more clear, by showing that visible items have no properties or entities *within themselves* that explain their relations to the Forms. Whatever explains those relations, then, must come from elsewhere. This is what we should have expected, since locating some stable property or entity within a visible item, on whose strength the visible thing's participation in a Form would be explained, would give visible items a source of stability inconsistent with claims familiar from the theory of Forms about the instability of the visible world.

Timaeus' program of reducing all forms of change to spatial motion may be an attempt to reduce the general problem of understanding change to the better-defined, smaller problem of understanding motion through space. Since knowledge of geometry was much more advanced than that of chemistry, biology or physics in Plato's time, this was a promising proposal. Just as one prominent research program in cognitive science today attempts to reduce the hard problem of understanding consciousness to the better-understood problem of understanding computational algorithms, the program in the *Timaeus* is an attempt to reduce the hard problem of understanding change in general to the (at the time) better-understood problem of understanding motion through space. This latter problem was being addressed by geometry with much success in Plato's time. Anyone looking for a research program to understand change in general in Plato's time had good reason to settle on this one. Since the *Timaeus* contains all the elements of this program, it is plausible that Plato was aware of it, considered it promising, and wanted to further it.



## Chapter 3

### *Kinesis* as Spatial Motion

Three of Plato's dialogues contain the claim that souls *move* — whatever this may mean — and, further, the claim that they move *themselves*, the dialogues in question being the *Phaedrus*, *Laws*, and *Timaeus*. Perhaps because these three dialogues speak only briefly of these ideas, and apparently differ from one another on certain other, closely related questions, scholars have rarely given these passages sustained attention. Thus, the most basic contribution I hope to make in this chapter is to show that detailed argument based on textual evidence can make progress on these questions. The result of this inattention, I shall argue in this chapter, has been two mistakes in the received scholarly picture of what Plato's dialogues say on this point. First, of those who have commented on the issue at all, many writers have endorsed the wrong interpretation of “motion” (κίνησις) in these passages, taking it as a metaphor, image, or otherwise shorthand expression for “change” in general.<sup>1</sup> Second, it has been tacitly assumed that the ideas expressed about souls

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<sup>1</sup>For example, Burnyeat and Levett (1990, p.311 n.36), Urmson (1990, p.90), Ostenfeld (1989, p.324), Griswold (1986, p.85), Ritter et al. (1971, Vol. I, column 866).

and motions in the *Phaedrus*, *Laws*, and *Timaeus* are found *only* in those dialogues.<sup>2</sup> With respect to the first mistake, I shall argue that the best reading of “motion” in these passages is “locomotion,” “motion through space,” rather than “change” in general.<sup>3</sup> Regarding the second, I shall argue that the *Statesman* also contains a passage whose claims logically imply that the soul of the Demiurge moves spatially. So the claims about souls moving (spatially) are not limited to the three obvious cases.

I begin with the *Phaedrus* and *Laws*, since these texts say explicitly that souls are self-movers, allowing my argument to focus merely on showing that the sense of “motion” involved is *spatial* rather than *generic*. The *Timaeus* never says explicitly that souls are *self*-movers, so my argument here will focus on showing that *Timaeus*’ speech implies this view, and also that the sense of “motion” involved is spatial, the latter claim relatively easy to demonstrate. Finally, the myth told by the Stranger in the *Statesman* logically implies that at least *some* souls are in spatial motion, so my argument will focus on showing how this claim is implied by the text.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>The view I shall argue for here, that a single conception of motion is found in more than these three dialogues, is new, so far as I am aware: it is neither affirmed nor denied by any author, except by implication. Miller, in his recent survey of Platonic psychology, discusses only these three dialogues for the idea of self-motion (2006, pp.289–292). Robinson denies that those three dialogues even contain the same concept of self-motion: Robinson (1995b, pp.133, 146–148, and 151). He also denies that the sense of “motion” is spatial: Robinson (1995b, p.151). Skemp notes that it has been commonly thought that the theory of Forms is Plato’s only significant metaphysical claim. Skemp wishes to add the theory of motion to this list, but denies that the sense of “motion” involved is spatial: Skemp (1942, pp.ix–xi, 21 and 86).

<sup>3</sup>Sedley (1997, pp.329–330) and Barnes (1979, p.118) (writing about the *Phaedrus* only) have also argued that these claims refer to locomotion rather than change in general.

<sup>4</sup>For discussion of some general interpretive issues related to this chapter, see the Introduction, page 8.

## The Generic Reading of κίνησις

A number of writers say that Plato's use of κίνησις means "change" in a generic sense, and this can seem obviously right when reading certain passages.<sup>5</sup> Here I provide an example of such a reading, since its author, Miles Burnyeat, spells out the reasoning by which he arrives at it. Since most authors who endorse this reading elsewhere do not explain their thinking, I will assume that they too follow something like this train of thought. Burnyeat is discussing the following passage in the *Theaetetus*:

Socrates: Here then is one form of motion [i.e. spatial movement]. Then supposing a thing remains in the same place, but grows old, or becomes black instead of white, or hard instead of soft, or undergoes any other alteration; isn't it right to say that here we have motion (κινήσεως) in another form?

Theodorus: Unquestionably.

Socrates: Then I now have two forms of motion (κινήσεως), alteration and spatial movement.

Burnyeat comments:

In the above passage the words *kinēsis*, *kineisthai*, translated 'motion', 'be in motion', take on a wider sense than they would normally have.

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<sup>5</sup>Those expressing the opinion that Plato's use of κίνησις is generic include Urmson (1990, p.90), Ostenfeld (1989, p.324), Griswold (1986, p.85) and Ritter et al. (1971, Vol. I, column 866). With respect to *Theaetetus* 181c–d, those describing spatial motion and alteration as species of *change* include Chappell (2004, p. 138), Sedley (2004, p. 92), Cooper (1967, p. 90) and Heitsch (1988, p. 45). Those describing the two as species of *motion* in this passage (but without further comment on the conception of motion): Polansky (1992, pp. 156–157), Desjardins (1990, pp. 95–97): so it is likely that *all* the authors listed think of κίνησις as "change" in a generic sense. Skemp alone relates this passage to the *Timaeus*' claim that "all these alterations are reducible ultimately to forms of locomotion..." (Skemp 1942, p. 12).

Normally they would signify some kind of movement, especially spatial movement, but the Heraclitean philosophy makes the flowing movement of a river the symbol of change in general and *change in general is what 'motion' becomes when alteration is subsumed under it...* (Burnyeat and Levett 1990, p.311 n.36, emphasis added)

Now Burnyeat's reasoning is sensible with regard to this passage in isolation, but I shall argue that the same reasoning goes astray if applied to passages in the *Phaedrus*, *Laws*, *Timaeus*, or *Statesman*. Notice for the moment that Burnyeat's argument assumes that alteration is *not* a form of spatial movement; should alteration be explained as spatial movement, as the Kinetic Theory does, Burnyeat's argument will be invalid. However, I shall not rely on the existence of the Kinetic Theory when I examine the passages at issue in this chapter; I shall instead argue that evidence from within each passage entails that κίνησις means "spatial movement" rather than "change" in general.

### 3.1 *Phaedrus* 245c–246a

A short passage near the center of the *Phaedrus*, running from 245c5–246a2, contains the claims that souls are in motion and are self-movers. Earlier in the dialogue, Socrates has delivered a speech on love, in which he claimed that one should prefer suitors not in love to those in love, on the ground that love is a kind of madness. He now wishes to retract that statement, partly in the belief that he has offended the god of love, partly, perhaps, as a way of leading *Phaedrus* toward philosophy.<sup>6</sup> So the announced purpose of his second speech is to defend love as

<sup>6</sup>Note that, although Socrates' two speeches contradict one another on some points, such as whether love is advantageous, the first speech contains no claims about the nature of soul. So while

a form of “divine madness.” Socrates begins this second speech by mentioning other forms of divine madness: the priestesses at Delphi and Dodona are successful only when mad, as are poets and those who succeed in divining the causes of divine anger against certain families. Having introduced his subject, Socrates next announces that he must begin by explaining the truth about “the nature of soul, both divine and human, by observing experiences and actions belonging to it” (245c2–4).

## The Text

The passage I shall be discussing follows:

Ψυχὴ πᾶσα ἀθάνατος. τὸ γὰρ ἀεικίνητον ἀθάνατον· τὸ δ' ἄλλο κινουὺν καὶ ὑπ' ἄλλου κινούμενον, παῦλαν ἔχον κινήσεως, παῦλαν ἔχει ζωῆς. μόνον δὴ τὸ αὐτὸ κινουὺν, ἅτε οὐκ ἀπολεῖπον ἑαυτό, οὐποτε λήγει κινούμενον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὅσα κινεῖται τοῦτο πηγὴ καὶ ἀρχὴ κινήσεως. ἀρχὴ δὲ ἀγέννητον. ἐξ ἀρχῆς γὰρ ἀνάγκη πᾶν τὸ γινόμενον γίνεσθαι, αὐτὴν δὲ μηδ' ἐξ ἐνός· εἰ γὰρ ἔκ του ἀρχῆς γίγνοιτο, οὐκ ἂν ἔτι ἀρχὴ γίγνοιτο. ἐπειδὴ δὲ ἀγέννητόν ἐστιν, καὶ ἀδιάφθορον αὐτὸ ἀνάγκη εἶναι. ἀρχῆς γὰρ δὴ ἀπολομένης οὔτε αὐτὴ ποτε ἔκ του οὔτε ἄλλο ἐξ ἐκείνης γενήσεται, εἴπερ ἐξ ἀρχῆς δεῖ τὰ πάντα γίνεσθαι. οὕτω δὴ κινήσεως μὲν ἀρχὴ τὸ αὐτὸ αὐτὸ κινουὺν. τοῦτο δὲ οὔτ' ἀπόλλυσθαι οὔτε γίνεσθαι δυνατόν, ἢ πάντα τε οὐρανὸν πᾶσάν τε γῆν εἰς ἓν συμπεσοῦσαν στήναι καὶ μήποτε αὐθις ἔχειν ὅθεν κινηθέντα γενήσεται. ἀθανάτου δὲ πεφασμένου τοῦ ὑφ' ἑαυτοῦ κινουμένου, ψυχῆς οὐσίαν τε καὶ λόγον τοῦτον αὐτόν τις λέγων οὐκ αἰσχυνεῖται. πᾶν γὰρ σῶμα, ᾧ μὲν ἔξωθεν τὸ κινεῖσθαι, ἄψυχον, ᾧ δὲ ἔνδοθεν αὐτῷ ἐξ αὐτοῦ, ἔμψυχον, ὡς ταύτης οὔσης φύσεως ψυχῆς· εἰ δ' ἔστιν τοῦτο οὕτως ἔχον, μὴ ἄλλο τι εἶναι τὸ αὐτὸ ἑαυτὸ κινουὺν ἢ ψυχὴν, ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἀγέννητόν τε καὶ ἀθάνατον ψυχὴ ἂν εἴη. (245c5–246a2) All soul is immortal. For that

which is always in movement is immortal; that which moves some-

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there is room to question Socrates' commitment to some of what he says in the second speech, on the ground that it contradicts his earlier one, nothing in the proof passage (245c5–246a2) contradicts anything said in the first speech. *This*, at least, is not a reason for wondering whether Socrates means what he says in this section.

thing else, and is moved by something else, in ceasing from movement ceases from living. So only that which moves itself, because it does not abandon itself, never stops moving. But it is also source and first principle of movement for the other things which move. Now a first principle is something which does not come into being. For all that comes into being must come into being from a first principle, but a first principle itself cannot come into being from anything at all; for if a first principle came into being from anything, it would not do so from a first principle. Since it is something that does not come into being, it must also be something which does not perish. For if a first principle is destroyed, neither will it ever come into being from anything itself nor will anything else come into being from it, given that all things must come into being from a first principle. It is in this way, then, that that which moves itself is a first principle of movement. It is not possible for this either to be destroyed or to come into being, or else the whole universe and the whole of that which comes to be might collapse together and come to a halt, and never again have a source from which things will be moved and come to be. And since that which is moved by itself has been shown to be immortal, it will incur no shame to say that this is the essence and definition of soul. For all body which has its source of motion outside itself is soulless, whereas that which has it within itself, from itself, is ensouled, this being the nature of soul; and if this is the way it is — that that which moves itself is nothing other than soul — then soul will necessarily be something that neither comes into being nor dies. (Rowe's translation)

## The Structure of the Proof

I analyze the proof's logical structure as follows.<sup>7</sup>

1. Soul is that which is its own source of motion.
2. That which is its own source of motion is immortal.

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<sup>7</sup>My analysis follows that of Bett (1986) at the general level. I differ from him on certain details, some of which I will discuss later. For other analyses, see Blyth (1997, esp. p. 194 nn. 18–19), Robinson (1995b, pp. 111–119), Heitsch (1993, pp. 105–109) and Hackforth (1952, pp. 63–68).

### 3. Therefore, soul is immortal.<sup>8</sup>

The text presents these steps in reverse order, stating the conclusion first (245c5), then arguing for Step (2) from 245c5–e2, finally arguing for Step (1) from 245e3–246a1. The conclusion of the entire argument is stated at 246a1–2. In addition, the proof provides two independent arguments for Step 2, the first claiming that a self-mover is immortal because to stop moving would be to abandon its own nature, the second claiming that a self-mover is immortal because it is a principle of motion for all else that is moved.

In Chapter 4 I will argue that the proof does not, as is commonly assumed, reach the conclusion that *individual* souls are immortal, but rather claims that “soul-stuff,” the material from which individual souls are constructed, is immortal.

### κίνησις as Spatial Motion

*Phaedrus* 245c5–246a2 is inconsistent if κίνησις is read as generic change. As I argue for this claim, I shall assume that κινεῖν (“to move”) and related words have a single sense throughout this passage, so that Socrates does not make the elementary mistake of equivocation. My argument does not depend on the questions most often raised about this passage, such as the meaning of ψυχὴ πᾶσα (“all soul”) at c5,<sup>9</sup> whether to read ἀεικίνητον (“always-moving”) or αὐτοκίνητον

<sup>8</sup>Bett (1986, p. 3)

<sup>9</sup>For discussion of this point, see Nicholson (1999, pp. 156–157), Blyth (1997, pp. 186–187), Rowe (1986, p. 174), Bett (1986, pp. 12–15), Robinson (1995b, p. 111), Griswold (1986, p. 84), De Vries (1969, p. 121), Hackforth (1952, pp. 64–65). Hackforth and Bett argue that if this phrase is meant as a “mass term” or as a kind of “soul-stuff” it will follow that *whatever* is true of soul-stuff will be true of individual souls. However, I will argue in Chapter 4 that this inference is invalid.

(“self-moving”) at c5,<sup>10</sup> or exactly how the details of the proof work.

At various points, the proof claims that “soul” falls into the category of τὸ αὐτὸ κινουῦν (“what moves itself,” 245c7), τὸ αὐτὸ αὐτὸ κινουῦν (“what itself moves itself,” 245d7), τοῦ ὑφ’ ἑαυτοῦ κινουμένου (“what is moved by itself,” 245e3), and τὸ αὐτὸ ἑαυτὸ κινουῦν (“what itself moves itself,” 245e7-246a1): four instances of nearly the same formula. Since Socrates calls this “the essence and the definition of soul” (ψυχῆς οὐσίαν τε καὶ λόγον, 245e3),<sup>11</sup> it is important to understand κινεῖν, whose most basic meaning indicates movement through space.<sup>12</sup> For there is a large difference between classifying souls as “self-locomotors” and “self-changers,” and no author has so far asked what happens when these readings are applied specifically to each claim using “κίνησις (and related terms). This experiment will force us to reject the more general reading, “change.”

<sup>10</sup>On this point see Blyth (1997, p. 195 n. 22), Robinson (1995b, pp. 111–112), Bett (1986, p. 4 n. 6), De Vries (1969, pp. 121–122), Hackforth (1952, p. 65). Following the arguments of most recent scholars, I will read αἰκίνητον below, but my arguments would go through with the alternative just as well.

<sup>11</sup>The word λόγον in this phrase may also mean “account.” Adopting this translation would mean that “what moves itself” is not a definition of soul but (merely) a description, a somewhat weaker claim, but still significant, and still requiring us to decide between the two readings at issue here.

<sup>12</sup>Liddell et al. (1996, s.v. κινέω, A11a, B1). Ostenfeld writes, “self-motion is physical motion,” implying that he means motion through space. In the same article, however, he takes κίνησις to mean change in general, so which position he intends to endorse is not clear. (Ostenfeld 1989, pp. 324–325, 327). Several writers do not take a position on this question, although their word choice suggests one or the other. Hackforth, for example, consistently uses “motion” and “move,” but never says definitely that he intends spatial movement rather than change in general. (Hackforth 1955, pp. 64–68) Rowe writes, “Being moved, as is implicit in the whole argument, is a specific kind of ‘coming into being’ or change.” I take it Rowe means movement through space when he writes “being moved,” but the sentence might also be read as saying that “being moved” is something more specific than “change” in the most general sense, but broader than just spatial motion. (Rowe 1986, p. 176 ad d7–e2) Robinson, contrasting the *Phaedrus* with the *Phaedo*, says, “Now [sc. in the *Phaedrus*] soul is seen as the source of motion or activity...”, suggesting that he favors the more general reading. (Robinson 1995b, p. 114, emphasis added).



### Step 1

The text presents the claims in reverse order, but I will discuss them in their logical order, as parsed above on page 160. Let us begin with Socrates' claim that "all body which has its source of motion (τὸ κινεῖσθαι, e5) from outside is soulless, whereas that which has it from within, from itself, is ensouled, this being the nature of soul..." (245e4–6, Rowe's translation, modified).

This claim occurs late in the passage, forming part of the argument for Step 1, the claim that soul is identical with that which is its own source of motion. This is the part of the proof (245e3–246a1) with the fewest metaphysical and logical entanglements, so it is relatively easy to decide which sense to apply here. That is, the claim that soul is its own source of motion receives no argument in this passage other than the empirical observation just quoted — bodies have a source of motion within themselves if and only if they are alive. Socrates treats this observation as unproblematic, making it easy to evaluate which sense of κίνησις to apply here. Applying the two competing readings, this statement means one of the following:

- All body which has its source of *spatial motion* from outside is soulless, whereas that which has its source of *spatial motion* from within is ensouled.
- All body which has its source of *change* from outside is soulless, whereas that which has its source of *change* from within is ensouled.

Socrates speaks as if it is both possible and easy to distinguish living from non-living bodies by observing whether they move themselves. The first reading of this criterion refers to just one kind of change, making it both clear and easy to apply, whereas the second uses the general concept of "change," encompassing

any and all forms of change, and rendering it unclear how it would be applied in any particular case.<sup>13</sup> Generality renders the second version unclear and thus also unusable. Now Socrates does not justify this claim at all — indeed, he does not even explain it. He seems to regard it as axiomatic, something Phaedrus will accept without argument. This treatment points to reading “motion” as “spatial motion.”

To explain further. It is easy to observe whether a body causes its own locomotion, provided we stick to common sense and don't put too fine a point on things. Intuitively, my dog lies down for a nap after eating because he feels sleepy and wants to, while another dog down the street runs at me when I pass because he doesn't like me. Each has a source of spatial motion from within, supporting my belief that they are alive. My book, on the other hand, fell off the table because an earthquake shook the table; since the source of its spatial motion lay outside itself, I do not think the book is alive. These observations suggest that Socrates is talking about the difference between having a source of spatial motion within oneself and receiving spatial motions from outside oneself. But if he means “change” rather than “locomotion,” the criterion is unclear and hard to apply: is the source of that piece of iron's rusting within itself or outside it? The iron is rusting partly because of the kind of material composing it, and partly because of its contact with the air. The principle yields no answer in this case, nor in many others, because

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<sup>13</sup>Note that the suggestion that “motion” means something like “spiritual motion” or “psychic change,” and nothing more, cannot be applied here, since in this passage Socrates is discussing some kind of motion/change that both souls and bodies can have. If “motion” means “psychic change” *plus* some kind of physical change, then the problem we are discussing remains, that is, we must still ask *which* kind of physical change is meant. Finally, note that the generic reading *includes* the spatial reading, so it is not possible to give a reading on which “motion” means *both* spatial motion *and* generic change; such a reading reduces to the generic one, and will have all the problems that rule it out.

“change” is too general. Consider again the two dogs, this time using “change” as our criterion. As before, the dog runs at me because he has a source of spatial motion within himself. But since our criterion is now broader, this does not yet tell us whether the dog is alive. We also need to look at other changes the dog is undergoing: he is getting hungry, perceiving me, and growing older,<sup>14</sup> to take only a few examples. The hunger seems to come from within, the perception of me from without, and growing older is (as far as I can see) indeterminate. This case will be typical of most: using “change” as a criterion gives contradictory answers, and sometimes gives no obvious answer at all.

The moral is that if we try to figure out which objects cause their own *changes*, we run into theoretical problems more difficult than those this criterion was supposed to solve. To make this test give the expected answers about which things are alive, Socrates will have to supply some *further* criterion for distinguishing which things have their source of growing older within themselves, and so on. By now the point should be clear: most changes one might pick out are like getting older: they will be of no use at all in distinguishing living from non-living things. Spatial motion, however, works easily for the purpose to which Socrates puts it here. In other words, only on the reading of “motion” as “locomotion” has Socrates said something that Phaedrus and the reader can accept as reasonably clear without immediately requiring a great deal of additional theory. Socrates treats this assertion as immediately clear, needing no explanation. So the reading consistent with the text is that he is asserting the first version above. “Motion” means “locomotion” at Step 1 of the proof.

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<sup>14</sup>As we saw above, Plato classifies growing older as a kind of motion/change (κίνησις) at *Theaetetus* 181d.

## Step 2, Part 1

Step 2 of the proof also uses κίνησις to mean “locomotion.” The proof begins with the claim that anything always in motion is immortal (τὸ γὰρ ἀεικίνητον ἀθάνατον, 245c5). This claim is therefore part of Step 2, which says that anything which is its own source of motion is immortal. This claim means one of the following, depending on how we understand κίνησις:

1. Anything always in *spatial motion* is immortal.
2. Anything always *changing* is immortal.

Only the first is consistent with the rest of the proof. For on the second version, because many entities change at all times in some way or other, it will be the case that all such entities are immortal.

Plato’s texts often treat κίνησις as including many changes, including even (as we saw above) merely growing older. Again, one of Plato’s favorite general axia is that every part of the visible world is always changing in *some* respect.<sup>15</sup> So if Step 2 refers to *change*, as in the second version, the argument proves too much: many things that do not conventionally count as alive will be not only alive, but also immortal. So the argument would prove not only that soul is immortal, but everything else in the visible world as well. There is no basis in any Platonic text for attributing this claim either to Socrates or to Plato; the reading using “change” is thus not plausible. Anyone worried that reading κίνησις as “spatial motion” gives

<sup>15</sup>For example: “...when the soul makes use of the body...it is dragged by the body to the things that are never the same...” (*Phaedo* 79c2–7, emphasis added), “...the body is most like that which is...never consistently the same” (*Phaedo* 80b4–5), “What is that which always is and has no becoming, and what is that which becomes but never is?” (*Timaeus* 27d6–28a1), “The second thing...can be perceived by the senses, and...it is constantly borne along (πεφορημένον αἰεὶ)...” (*Timaeus* 52a4–6).

counterintuitive results should compare those that follow from reading κίνησις as “change.” So at Step 2 of the proof as well, Socrates’ claim only makes sense if “motion” means “locomotion.”

#### An objection based on ἀεικίνητον

In discussing Step 2, I relied on a particular reading of ἀεικίνητον. But this term, “always moving,” is ambiguous, and the ambiguity can fuel an objection to my view. In deciding whether some entity counts as always-moving, one might rely on observations of it in the present and records of its past behavior, using this information to *predict* whether or not the thing is immortal. On this approach, *Phaedrus* 245c5–246a2 is an argument whose conclusion is that soul is immortal, the analysis usually given by scholars, and with which I am in agreement.<sup>16</sup> If we understand the passage’s structure this way, and try to read κίνησις as “change,” we encounter the problem I have just described, namely that many parts of the visible world turn out both alive and immortal, a bizarre claim to attribute to a Platonic text. On this reading of the passage, therefore, the best understanding of κίνησις is “spatial motion.”

The other reading of “always moving,” however, might appear to block my argument. This reading takes “always moving” as picking out all and only those entities that *really are* immortal, in Plato’s view, namely souls. One can read the prefix ἀει-, “always,” as a *prerequisite* that an entity be in motion at all times (and not merely at all times that it happens to exist) to qualify as “always-moving.” So

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<sup>16</sup>It would be more natural to say “souls are immortal,” but the argument is about “soul,” whatever that turns out to mean. So I leave the term as it is here, and consider in Chapter 4 what we should make of that feature of the passage.

even if some entity has been in motion for as long as one has observed it, it does not count as always-moving, if it is ever *going* to die or perish. But this reading makes the argument circular. Since the conclusion of *Phaedrus* 245c5–246a2 is that soul is immortal, if “always-moving” excludes everything except soul on the ground that only soul is immortal, the argument is circular in an especially obvious way. No one, so far as I am aware, has suggested why Socrates would give an obviously circular argument at this point in his speech, nor again, how Socrates could be unaware that his argument is bad. Unless there is another way to explain the point of 245c–246a, then, this reading cannot get off the ground. So this suggestion fails to undermine my reading, and should instead increase our confidence that κίνησις means “locomotion.”

#### Step 2, Part 2

When we examine the most difficult part of the proof, the claim that soul is a first principle of movement (ἀρχὴ κινήσεως, 245c9), and therefore indestructible, we find again that κίνησις must be read as “spatial motion.” Again, we can parse this statement in two forms:

1. Soul is a first principle of *spatial motion*.
2. Soul is a first principle of *change*.

Now one of the argument’s other claims is that a first principle cannot come into or go out of being: in particular, if the first principle of κίνησις perished, nothing else would be able to move or be moved (κινεῖν/κινεῖσθαι). This part of the argument assumes a “spillover” theory of causality, such that for A to cause B to

become *x*, *A* must have some *x* in itself, which “spills over,” or is somehow transferred, into *B*.<sup>17</sup> The first version is intelligible on this approach to causality. It is, in fact, not very different from the way Newton’s First Law of Motion describes the transmission of motion among billiard balls: an object at rest tends to remain at rest, unless it receives some motion (to put it in the rather crude terms of the theory in the text).<sup>18</sup> If an object receives some motion, this explains the fact that it then begins to move. A moving billiard ball striking a stationary one, thereby causing the stationary one to begin moving, illustrates this thought aptly. This argument in the *Phaedrus* treats all visible objects as a single class, and claims that unless there is a first principle of motion from which this class receives some motion, members of that class cannot move; this is just the billiard-ball case elevated to a more abstract metaphysical level.

But the idea that a first principle of *change* is necessary in order for other things to change casts its net too broadly, for several reasons. First, if soul is not only the first principle of locomotion, but of all changes, then it is, among other things, the first principle of perishing, since perishing is a kind of change. But on the Spillover Theory of causality, if souls are the source of perishing, they must have perishing

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<sup>17</sup>Barnes recognizes this feature of the argument as well (Barnes 1979, pp. 118–119). He refers to this concept of causation as the “Synonymy Principle” (p. 88), but this suggests that the idea behind it is that words somehow cause events. “Spillover” captures, I hope, the thought that the causally responsible item must have something within itself that is transferred to the item affected, and that this something must be the same kind of thing in both objects. The principle is in fact false, but is nevertheless found in the text.

<sup>18</sup>I am not, of course, claiming that Plato’s text anticipates Newton’s First Law of Motion, only that the explanation Newton’s Law gives for this particular phenomenon, in which a moving object strikes a stationary one, the former transmitting some of its inertia/motion to the latter, is roughly the same as that implied by this passage of the *Phaedrus*. Where Newton’s Law uses the concept of inertia, Plato speaks (less correctly) of motion. But both theories explain the case by saying that the moving ball transmits some *x* that it has to the stationary ball, and the transferred quantity explains why the stationary ball begins moving.

within themselves.<sup>19</sup> This result generalizes to every property ever possessed by any visible object: these must *all* be located in soul; otherwise soul will not be able to cause that property in other things.

The requirement that soul possess every property of visible items creates further unacceptable results. Each soul will have to possess many properties opposite to one another, and so (following one of Plato's favorite tropes) it will be the case that souls are "no more X than Y," where X and Y are any of these opposites. So no soul will be more courageous than cowardly, or more good than bad. Since Plato's characters frequently interest themselves in how souls can be courageous or good, this cannot be the right reading. Again, souls will have many properties within themselves that do not apply to souls at all: they will be *green*, *steep*, and *high-pitched*, for example. On the other hand, if no soul has these properties, no visible object can have them either. This is implausible, both in its own right and as a theory attributed to Socrates in the *Phaedrus*. Finally, the property of perishing in particular contradicts the conclusion of the proof: for if soul does not have perishing within itself, then no visible object will be capable of perishing either. But if soul does have perishing in itself, it must also perish. For on the theory of Forms, participating in a Form is equivalent to having that Form's property within oneself, and this is equivalent to instantiating that property.<sup>20</sup> Since the proof is supposed to show that soul does not perish, this is not the right way to read its underlying metaphysics. For the third time, we see that κίνησις must be read as "spatial motion" in this passage.

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<sup>19</sup>I see no evidence of any other approach to causality at *Phaedrus* 245c–246a.

<sup>20</sup>"...when you then say that Simmias is taller than Socrates but shorter than Phaedo, do you not mean that there is in Simmias both tallness and shortness?" (*Phaedo* 102b4–6)



*Phaedrus* 245c–246a and the Kinetic Theory of the *Timaeus*

The claims of *Phaedrus* 245c–246a can be combined with the Kinetic Theory from the *Timaeus* to create a version of the Unified Theory. This will help to answer certain questions about other features of the *Phaedrus* proof. In the same part of Step 2 we have just been discussing, in which Socrates claims that soul is a first principle of motion, he draws conclusions broader than one would expect if κίνησις means “spatial motion” and *nothing more*.

It is not possible for this either to be destroyed or to come into being, or else the whole universe and the whole of that which comes to be might collapse together and come to a halt, and never again have a source from which things will be moved and come to be (ὅθεν κινήθεται γένήσεται, 245e2).

If κίνησις meant *only* “spatial motion” — that is, without the extension to “change” provided by the Kinetic Theory — we would expect the conclusion of this sentence to read, “and never again have a source from which things will be *moved*,” without mentioning coming-to-be in addition to motion. Instead, Socrates says that all coming-to-be would cease. This suggests that spatial motion, the direct referent of “κίνησις,” is also connected to change in general. The Kinetic Theory provides just such a connection, for on this theory spatial motion is the only real form of change, but different varieties of *spatial motion* are identical with what are conventionally identified as other forms of *change*. This theory explains why, if soul is the principle of spatial motion, the perishing of soul would lead to the absence of all forms of *change*. Since all forms of change are forms of spatial motion, the removal of the principle of spatial motion would be equivalent to the removal of

the principle of all forms of change.

As a more particular example of how these two theories work together, consider perishing. An object perishes, on the Kinetic Theory, not because it partakes of the Form Perishing (though this may also be true of it), nor because there is a special first principle (ἀρχή) of perishing, but because the spatial arrangements of its parts change so that they no longer constitute the same object (or the same kind of object). Soul, on this theory, is a principle (ἀρχή) of spatial motion only. Spatial motions, when transmitted to visible objects, may instantiate properties that the source of the spatial motions did not have within itself. Thus there can be imperishable soul that is indirectly the ἀρχή of perishing, although directly it is the principle of nothing but spatial motion.

Objection: Which Properties is Soul the Principle Of?

One might worry that whereas I have just claimed that, according to the Unified Theory, soul is not a source of perishing, in fact the Unified Theory guarantees that soul is the source of perishing.<sup>21</sup> For perishing is just a certain kind of spatial motion, on the Kinetic Theory, and as the sole source of spatial motions, soul must be the source of all kinds of spatial motion. So soul must be the source of perishing — just the result I claimed this theory avoids. But in fact this is a toothless worry, one that Plato can happily concede.

To see why this worry is misplaced, review the problems raised above for the generic reading of κίνησις as “change.” First, if soul is the source of perishing, it has perishing within itself (by the theory of Forms), and therefore must perish.

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<sup>21</sup>I have already discussed a similar objection in Chapter 2; see page 152.

But the Kinetic Theory leaves conceptual space to differentiate between having a *source* of perishing within oneself, and having a quality, *perishing*, within oneself. The Kinetic Theory, conjoined with *Phaedrus* 245c–246a, need concede only that soul is the source of perishing, not that soul has the quality *perishing* within itself. The Spillover Theory of causality says that if soul has a source of perishing within itself, it transmits this source both to visible items and to itself. But this source is just spatial motion, not the property *perishing*; transmitting spatial motion to oneself and to visible items is necessary, but not sufficient, to cause perishing. So it does not follow that soul has the property *perishing* within itself, or that it itself perishes.

Second, soul would have to possess every property whatsoever within itself, an implausible claim, first because soul would possess many opposite properties, and second because it would possess many properties that logically cannot pertain to it. The same distinction — between possessing the source of these properties and possessing the properties themselves — solves this problem as well. First, the Kinetic Theory shows how two opposite properties can have a single source. For example, growing taller and growing shorter are opposite properties, but on the Kinetic Theory both are the result of spatial motions (of different types). So for soul to be the source of both, it suffices for it to be the source of spatial motions. Second, properties that do not pertain to soul at all, such as being steep, are also the result of spatial motions or arrangements, so that soul can be the *source* of these properties without *having* them.

Taking κίνησις as “spatial motion” is therefore consistent with the argument at 245c–246a; the alternative produces absurdity. Further, if conjoined with the

Kinetic Theory, the resulting Unified Theory yields a powerful account of how soul is related to all kinds of change in the visible world.

### Aristotle's Evidence

Aristotle supports reading κίνησις as “spatial motion,” for he takes locomotion as the “primary motion,” observing that “all who have ever made mention of motion...assign their principles of motion to things that impart motion of this kind” (*Physics* VIII.9 265b17–19). In his enumeration of examples, he mentions “those who make soul the cause of motion,” and points to the observation that “when animals and all living things move themselves, the motion is motion in respect of place” (265b33–34, 266a1–2). Since this is precisely the observation that Socrates uses in his proof (245e5–6), this parallel also suggests that his use of κίνησις throughout the proof refers to locomotion.

### Three Contrary Views

Richard Bett denies that κίνησις means “spatial motion” in this passage. He writes:

...the argument requires that we think of γένεσις as a species of κίνησις. For Plato introduces the notion of an ἀρχὴ κινήσεως, and then immediately goes on to say...that “everything that comes to be comes to be” out of an ἀρχή. For the argument to work, it must obviously be the same kind of ἀρχή under discussion throughout; and it follows that κίνησις cannot simply mean “(loco)motion”, but must refer to any kind of change whatever. However, there is nothing very startling in this. We find just such a broad notion of κίνησις explicit in the *Laws* (again in the context of a discussion of soul as self-mover)...<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Bett (1986, p. 9)

Having mentioned the *Laws*, Bett goes on to cite Aristotle (*Physics* III.1) and Parmenides as parallels for the use of κίνησις to mean change in general. I will comment on the *Laws* below, beginning on page 178.

The passage of the *Physics* that Bett refers to contains Aristotle's exposition of his own views about motion and change, so there is no reason to take it as a guide to Plato's views. We have already seen, however, that Aristotle refers to the locomotion of animals as equivalent to their being alive at *Physics* VIII.9. In this latter passage he is also discussing his understanding of the opinions of others, including "those who make soul the cause of motion." This is likely to be a better clue to what Plato thought, because it is a better clue to what Aristotle thought Plato thought. Finally, Parmenides' use of κίνησις cannot decide how we should read Plato here. The disagreement rests, then, on which sense can be read consistently throughout the argument. I have already argued that three claims only make sense if κίνησις means spatial motion. Bett thinks the passage must refer to only one kind of ἀρχή, and then argues that the single kind of ἀρχή cannot be κίνησις. But he never considers the problems resulting from the generic reading of κίνησις, nor the fact that the Kinetic Theory provides an account of how spatial motion accounts for all changes.

Blyth makes a similar point, writing, "...an unwary reader will assume the identity of motion and becoming...Yet this cannot be the case, as a self-mover would not then be ungenerated (but, by substitution, self-generating)."<sup>23</sup> As before, the solution lies in the fact that on the Kinetic Theory, spatial motion covers all the territory of becoming, but particular kinds of becoming occupy only limited parts

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<sup>23</sup>Blyth (1997, p. 202)

of the category of spatial motion. The generation of a visible thing typically consists of its constituent elements moving through space into the same location, as well as forming the right configuration within that location. Given these claims it does not follow, from the assumption that soul causes itself to move spatially, that it also causes itself to come into being. For in the case of visible items, not every spatial motion is also an instance of coming-into-being, and presumably the same is true of soul. Blyth's objection is invalid.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, Griswold also denies that self-motion can mean locomotion, on the grounds that "self-motion is incorporeal."<sup>25</sup> But this misses the point: the question is not whether self-motion can occur without a body, but whether self-motion can occur without a change of spatial location. Griswold seems to assume that locomotion implies corporeality. But if this is his reasoning, it is invalid. Geometers, for example, imagine paths through space without claiming that any body is

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<sup>24</sup>This also provides an answer to a question Bett raises on the following page: "But it is not clear why any one self-mover should have to be responsible for every one of the different species of κίνησις...Plato's argument requires that anything which is a self-mover is a first principle specifically of γένεσις; but it is not obvious to me why this should be taken for granted. Needless to say, Plato does not respond to this query..." Bett (1986, p. 10). Bett also asks why Socrates talks as if there is just one ἀρχή, while there are many souls. If one or a few souls were to perish, surely the others could go on serving as ἀρχαὶ κινήσεως. So the proof seems to assume that there is just one soul, or just one soul that is the ἀρχὴ κινήσεως. In Chapter 4 I will argue that this is one of many clues that individual souls are not being discussed in the proof.

<sup>25</sup>Griswold (1986, p. 85). Plato uses σῶμα for "body" in the *Phaedrus*, but never uses the word ἀσώματος in this dialogue. σῶμα usually refers to any visible body, not only to human and animal bodies, as it must, for example, at 245e4–5, where bodies are contrasted according to whether they have their sources of motion from within or from outside. Since the passage in the *Phaedrus* claims that soul is alive and a self-mover, and I am arguing that the correct reading of "motion" is "spatial motion," I also think that if soul ever exists without being attached to a particular body, it will nevertheless be alive, spatially located, and causing its own spatial motions. I say *if* soul ever exists without being attached to a particular body, for if soul is spatially located, and all the space there is is occupied by bodies (as Timaeus argues it is), then it follows that no matter where soul goes, it must occupy the same space as *some* body. So while the relation between an individual soul and a (merely) co-located body may be different than that between a soul and a human body it occupies, it may be misleading to speak of soul as *dis*-embodied.

present or travels along those paths. Plato was aware of this practice, and himself points out that no bodies are involved in geometric reasoning.<sup>26</sup>

#### Context within the *Phaedrus*

I have so far focused exclusively on the short proof passage, since this is one of the best candidates in the dialogue for an argument functioning logically, allowing us to draw inferences supported by the logic of the passage. I close this section by noting that several narrative and rhetorical features elsewhere in the dialogue are consistent with the supposition that soul moves itself through space; some may even be said to suggest this idea. At the dialogue's opening, Socrates and Phaedrus leave Athens, walking along the river Ilissus, eventually stopping in the shade of a tree. Other Platonic dialogues begin by describing the characters changing locations (e.g., the *Republic* and *Gorgias*), but the *Phaedrus* lays more stress than do the others on the characters' consciousness of place, and how their choice of where to move and where to stop come from within their personalities and motivations. Second, the passage I have just discussed in detail is closely followed, still within Socrates' second speech, by an extended myth telling how individual souls travel through the heavens when not in human or animal bodies. The central feature of this myth is the conceit that souls in the heavens, both human and divine, periodically travel up to and around the rim of the heavens in order to glimpse the Forms lying outside, either receiving nourishment from the sight or losing their wings and falling into mortal bodies if they fail to see the Forms. The myth's central explanatory device is the image of souls moving through space. I offer these

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<sup>26</sup>At *Republic* 510c–511a, for example.

two points only as starting points; a full treatment of the context would have to be much longer. But these examples show that the rest of the dialogue also betrays a heightened concern with places and locations. This concern corroborates my claim that the central concepts of the proof at 245c–246a are soul and *spatial* motion.

### 3.2 The Laws

In *Laws* X 891c–899d, the Athenian argues that soul is older than matter. Within this passage he defines soul as “motion capable of moving itself” (τὴν δυναμένην αὐτὴν αὐτὴν κινεῖν κίνησιν, 896a1–2), a formula not very different from the one used in the *Phaedrus* (τὸ αὐτὸ κινεῖν, 245c7).<sup>27</sup> Here in the *Laws*, too, this definition should be taken to mean that soul moves itself through space.<sup>28</sup>

This stretch of text is much too long to quote in full, so I will summarize the points important for my discussion. At 891c–892c the Stranger explains the chief

<sup>27</sup>The differences between the two definitions are intriguing. The *Phaedrus* version designates soul with the indefinite neuter article τὸ, while the *Laws* version says that soul is a motion (κίνησιν). Looking at the logic of each version, the *Phaedrus* says that something is soul if and only if it moves itself, while the *Laws* says that soul is a kind of motion, and then further specifies that it is the kind of motion capable of moving itself. While both definitions are built on the same central concept, namely self-motion, the *Laws* version is considerably more complex and precise. The *Laws* version may also strike us as the more puzzling of the two insofar as it defines soul as a kind of *motion*, whereas the *Phaedrus* version’s indefinite article leaves us free to think of soul as a kind of *thing*, a more familiar way of conceptualizing soul. But if we are tempted to think that the *Laws* puts soul into a new category of “motion,” contrasting it mysteriously with the more familiar category of “object,” it is possible we are looking in the wrong direction. I suggest, instead, that the *Laws*’ designation of soul as *motion* may reflect an assumption by the Athenian that *everything* (except the Forms, if they are part of his ontology) is a motion. If this is right, for example, then he might define matter as motion *not* capable of moving itself. The *Laws* definition, then, may be intended to emphasize precisely what soul and visible items have in common.

<sup>28</sup>Other writers claiming that the metaphysics of *Laws* 10 reproduces that of either the *Timaeus* or the *Phaedrus* include Carone (1994, pp. 279–280), Lee (1976, p. 102 n. 42) and Skemp (1942, p. 80).



conclusion he will reach in the ensuing argument, namely that “soul...is one of the *first* creations, born long before all physical things, and is the chief cause of all their alterations and transformations” (892a2–7). He explains that this claim can be established by showing that soul is older than body (892c5–7), following this with a taxonomy classifying all motions into ten kinds (893c–894c). The details of the classification are far from clear, but for our purposes we need only note the following. The motions are arranged in pairs, with the first pair being motion in one location, i.e. rotation about a fixed center, and motion in many locations. As he begins his list, the Stranger lingers over the description of rotation, apparently fascinated by the fact that points at different distances from the center trace out circles of different circumference, but all in the same period of time. The third through the eighth motions may be: combination and separation, increase and diminution, coming-into-being and perishing; this part of the taxonomy is unclear, but we need not sort it out here.<sup>29</sup> It is plausible that motions one through eight are all ways of moving through space; not so the ninth and tenth, which are described as “the kind which always imparts motion to something else and is itself changed by another thing,” and “the motion that moves both itself and other things...the source of change and motion in all things that exist” (894c3–8).

The Stranger next gives some short arguments to the effect that changes can only begin with the tenth kind (894e–895b), and after that invokes self-motion as the criterion of whether a visible thing is alive (895c).<sup>30</sup> He then defines soul as “motion capable of moving itself” (τὴν δυναμένην αὐτὴν αὐτὴν κινεῖν κίνησιν,

<sup>29</sup>For more discussion of this list, see Chapter 2, page 109.

<sup>30</sup>Since the Stranger uses this criterion, just as Socrates does in the *Phaedrus*, the arguments made above (page 163), showing that this criterion can only be used if “motion” means “spatial motion,” apply here as well.

896a1–2). At this point he announces that the main goal of this section has been accomplished, and his interlocutors agree that soul has been shown older than matter.

Finally, the Stranger explains the nature of rational motion, and argues that rotational motion is the best image of reason (897d–898b). This short argument is contained within a discussion of whether the heavenly bodies visible from earth are rational or irrational, good or bad (896d–899d). The gist of this argument is that since the heavenly bodies are observed to follow regular, circular orbits about the earth, and this kind of motion is most associated with reason, they are rational and good. Since they are considered gods by mankind, it follows that the universe is controlled and organized by good and rational gods. I begin my discussion of these arguments with the Stranger’s identification of rotation as the kind of motion most associated with rationality.

### The Nature of Rational Motion

At one point in his exposition the Stranger asks, “So what is the nature of rational motion?” (Τίνα οὖν δὴ νοῦ κίνησις φύσιν ἔχει; 897d3). This is the best place to begin, since the Stranger’s question and my own are nearly the same. The Stranger is asking about *rational* motion, which must always belong to soul; not all motions of soul must be rational, but all rational motions must belong to soul. So the answer to the Stranger’s question will tell us about *some* of the motions soul can perform; this may give us clues about the rest as well. The Stranger immediately singles out rotation about a single point as the motion from his earlier list of ten that most closely resembles reason (898a). He then lists several properties which this kind

of motion and reason share:

Take reason (νοῦν) on the one hand, and motion in a single location on the other. If we were to point out that in both cases (ἄμφω...λέγοντες) (a) the motion was determined by a single plan and procedure and that it was (b) regular, (c) uniform, (d) *always at the same point in space* (ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ), (e) *around a fixed center* (περὶ τὰ αὐτὰ), (f) *in the same position relative to other objects* (πρὸς τὰ αὐτὰ), and were to illustrate both by the example of a sphere being turned on a lathe, then no one could ever show us up for incompetent makers of verbal images. (898a8-b3, emphasis added and Saunders' labeling revised)<sup>31</sup>

Points (d), (e), and (f) attribute spatial location and spatial motion to reason, and this shows that the sense of “motion” involved in reason must be spatial.<sup>32</sup> For this is a list of properties which reason and rotational motion share (or “saying about both...”, ἄμφω...λέγοντες). If some of the properties belonged to reason in one sense, but to rotational motion in a different sense, there would be no sharing — no more than the moon and the number 100 share the property of being round. So the Stranger is claiming that reason is always at the same point in space, moves around a fixed center, and remains in the same position relative to other objects.

To deny that this description attributes spatial movement to reason, one would have to think the Stranger's speech equivocates, attributing spatial properties to rotational motion, and homonymous but different properties to reason.<sup>33</sup> There

<sup>31</sup>The phrases have been translated in various ways, not all equivalent. But the claims I am about to make will hold on any plausible translation. For example, Lee takes πρὸς τὰ αὐτὰ as “in the same direction or sense.” But this ascribes spatial location to the turning just as much as Saunders' version above.

<sup>32</sup>For a point-by-point examination of the comparisons in the passages, see Lee (1976, pp. 74–76). I discuss Lee's views further below.

<sup>33</sup>Lee's view, to be discussed shortly, is an example of this position. In commenting on the phrase περὶ τὰ αὐτὰ (“about the same things”), he writes: “This...must be made explicit so as to have us feel the pun connecting the spatial use of the preposition περὶ (turning about or around the same point)

are three problems with this line of thinking. The first is the equivocation itself: if he is merely equivocating, the Stranger's claim that reason and rotation share the properties he mentions is strictly false.

Second, on this reading, either all three characters fail to notice the equivocation, or the Stranger is deliberately misleading the other two, and neither alternative is consistent with the context. The Stranger is serious, earnest, and even wise; his partners follow his leads and accept his suggestions eagerly, nor is there any sign of conflict or disharmony. The Stranger is the most philosophically able of the three, but it would be hard to reconcile his seriousness with his deliberately employing such an outrageously bad argument at this key moment, in order to win the assent of two interlocutors who in any event are only too happy to agree with him. Nothing prepares the idea that the speaker misses a simple equivocation at one of the weightiest points in the discussion, nor that he chooses to equivocate in order to persuade the other two more easily.

The third, subtlest, and (yet) most logically forceful objection, is that the Stranger's choice of *rotation* as the motion most resembling reason is inexplicable unless he is thinking of reason as a kind of spatial motion. For there are not just one, but two motions on the Stranger's list of ten that bear "the closest possible affinity and likeness to the cyclical movement of reason." The Stranger's actual choice of rotation is the most like reason only if he is thinking of reason as spatial motion. The two candidates are the categories of "motion in a single location" (i.e. the first motion, 898b1), i.e. rotation, and "motion which can generate itself" (i.e. the

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with the intentional or cognitive use of the preposition (thinking about the same topic)..." Lee (1976, p. 76). Lee's view, of course, demonstrates that it is *possible* to read the passage as depending on equivocation, but such a reading does not do justice to the strenuous and unambiguous interest of the Stranger in showing the priority of soul to everything else.

tenth motion, 894d3–4).

The Stranger gives six reasons that rotation resembles reason, three invoking specifically spatial properties. But self-generating motion must also resemble reason in certain ways, since it turns out to define soul. Since reason is an activity of soul, reason is a species of self-generating motion, and a species must resemble its genus, since it instantiates the properties of the genus. So reason resembles both self-generating motion and rotational motion, and *prima facie*, the Stranger has two candidates to consider for the kind of motion most resembling reason. His choice is explicable on the assumption that reason is a kind of spatial motion, but puzzling if reason is not spatial motion.

If the Stranger thinks of both reason and self-generating motion as non-spatial changes, he should think these resemble each other more closely than either resembles rotational motion. For reason is a species of self-generating motion, so they share the property of being self-generating. And by hypothesis, neither type involves a change of spatial location, so they also share this property (i.e., *being non-spatial*, or *being spiritual motion*, or whatever property one wants to supply in place of spatiality). By contrast, rotational motion cannot be self-generating, since again by hypothesis self-generating motion is non-spatial. So on the assumption that the motions of soul are *not* changes in spatial location, the Stranger should not claim that reason resembles rotational motion more closely than any other motion: rotation lacks two properties which reason has, while self-moving motion has both. Nor do the other points of comparison that he mentions help with this puzzle, since points (a), (b) and (c) fit either self-generating motion or rotation equally well.

However, the puzzle dissolves if all ten motions listed by the Stranger (and not merely one through eight) are spatial motions.<sup>34</sup> Now his choice of rotational motion can be justified. As before, reason is a species of self-moving motion, since it is an activity of soul. But since both self-moving motion and reason are spatial motions, this property does not make reason more like self-generating motion than it is like rotation. Again, since self-moving motion is also spatial motion, it follows that some instances of rotational motion can also be self-moving. If this suggestion is correct, the Stranger would probably accept “self-moving rotational motion” as a definition of reason.

The Stranger immediately puts his comparison of reason and rotation to work to argue that the rotations we observe in the heavens imply that the souls directing the heavenly bodies are supremely rational (898c–899a).<sup>35</sup> Taking the sun as illustration, the Stranger assumes that it moves in a circle because there is a soul driving it in a circle. He considers three ways that this soul might operate in order to produce the observed effect of the sun’s circular motion:

Either (a) the soul resides within this visible spherical body and carries it wherever it goes, just as our soul takes us around from one place to another, or (b) it acquires its own body of fire or air of some kind (as certain people maintain), and impels the sun by the external contact

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<sup>34</sup>Furthermore, this hypothesis also explains why the Stranger uses the same term for them all, κίνησις.

<sup>35</sup>Lee argues that Plato *could not* have reasoned from the observed motions in the heavens to the conclusion that reason is circular motion, on the grounds that this would be no more than a *contingent* connection between circularity and reason. Had the heavens appeared to move in square-shaped motions, the argument would have shown that reason is a square-shaped motion. (Lee 1976, pp. 71–72) But I fail to see why Plato could not have reasoned this way. Only on the assumption that Plato was engaged in *a priori* reasoning, or looking for necessary and intimate connections between reason and circularity, does Lee’s argument go through. Since much of the material in the *Timaeus* and *Laws* includes empirical observations, this assumption is unconvincing.

of body with body, or (c) it is entirely immaterial (ψιλή σώματος οὐσα), but guides the sun along its path by virtue of possessing some other prodigious and wonderful powers. (898e8–899a4)

Each of these three hypotheses would require that the sun's soul to move in a circle, following the same path through space as the sun's body. This shows that the Stranger believes that *some* souls engage in spatial motion. His comparison of reason to rotational motion makes it likely that he thinks all souls are by definition in spatial motion, and that souls become more rational as their motions become more like circular rotation.

It remains to address an obvious worry: as the Stranger asks what is the nature of rational motion, he also announces that he will not answer directly, but will instead present an image (εἰκόνα) of rational motion (897d–e). Does this qualification, calling rotation an “image,” invalidate the argument that, since he compares reason to rotation, he must think reason is a kind of spatial motion? The qualification implies that his image is not like reason in *every* respect. This makes it easy to think that one way in which reason is not like rotation must be that it is non-spatial. But the Stranger never says this, and as we have seen, in the comparison of reason to rotation, he singles out three aspects that can only be spatial as important ways the two resemble one another. He then uses the likeness to argue that the sun's apparent circular motion shows that the soul controlling it is supremely rational. There is no evidence in this presentation that reason is conceived as non-spatial. Moreover, we can explain why the Stranger will not endorse rotation as more than an image of reason. For not all instances of rotation are instances of reason: the motion of the sun's body, for instance, is a kind of rotation, but this does not show that the sun's *body* is rational. Equally, not all self-generating mo-

tion is rational, since souls can behave irrationally. So the fact that the Stranger calls his account of reason an image does not settle the question *which* aspects of that account can be taken literally, and which only loosely. And the spatial aspects of the comparison are so central to it that the Stranger must be understood as attributing spatial motion to reason and to soul.

### Lee's View

Edward Lee gives an alternative to my view that deserves mention here, for his interpretation is specific and clear. Beginning from the Stranger's comparison of reason and rotation, Lee takes two interpretive steps. First, he insists that the Stranger is comparing reason not to a circle, a sphere, or any physical object, but to circular *motion*. Second, he distinguishes two ways of thinking about rotational motion. In the "accomplishment sense," we focus, for example, on a point located on a rotating disk. The point moves around in a circle a determinate number of times; if it does not go all the way around, we can measure how many degrees it has rotated. This kind of motion can be repeated, and in this sense it makes sense to talk about "going around again." Contrast this with the "activity sense," in which we focus on the disk or sphere *as a whole*. In this sense the entire disk is rotating, and its action of rotating is complete at every moment. Since there are no parts to consider, we cannot count how many rotations it has performed, and it makes no sense to talk about the disk undergoing *another* rotation.<sup>36</sup> Lee points out that the former, accomplishment sense, is like a count noun, while the

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<sup>36</sup>This distinction reproduces Aristotle's distinction between κίνησις ("motion") and ἐνέργεια ("activity"), on which see, for example, Mourelatos (1993). Mourelatos, however, is mostly concerned to point out ways in which the recent distinction *fails* to reproduce Aristotle's.



latter, activity sense is like a mass noun.<sup>37</sup> He then points out that Plato apparently regards the axis of rotation as motionless, while the disk or sphere rotates around it. The relation between the rotating disk/sphere and its own motionless axis is thus analogous to the relation between the activity of reason and the object it reasons about. Lee sees this as an image of impersonality. That is, the rotation of the disk represents for him the multiplication of perspectives one would achieve by physically walking around a visible object in order to see how it looks from every angle. This, he suggests, is the point of the Stranger's comparison.<sup>38</sup>

There are several reasons that Lee's view is untenable. The arguments I have already given (on the *Laws*) apply equally to Lee's position, so I will only add some objections specific to his view. First, Lee arrives at his position via two interpretive steps, of which the first is plausible: the Stranger does make his comparison between reason and *motion* (κίνησιν), rather than with *objects* that could engage in this kind of motion; his mention of disks and spheres is clearly only meant to illustrate his point, not to encourage a comparison with the disks or spheres as static objects. But Lee's second step has no support in the text, so far as I can see.<sup>39</sup> And while Lee is admirably clear in explaining his thoughts, he offers no textual support for the second move, the distinction between the accomplishment and activity senses. Nor, in discussing his position's merits, does he give reasons that would motivate taking this approach. In discussing Aristotle's criticisms of Plato, for example, he says only that Aristotle is using the wrong sense of rotation, never why this is the wrong sense.

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<sup>37</sup>Lee (1976, pp. 74–78)

<sup>38</sup>Lee (1976, pp. 80–81)

<sup>39</sup>See note 36: Lee is drawing on an Aristotelian distinction. But this tells us nothing about its applicability to Plato.

Further, the Stranger's interest in rotation is not what we would expect if he were working with the distinction between the accomplishment and activity senses. When he mentions rotation in a single place as his first kind of motion, the Stranger pauses to observe:

And we appreciate that when a disk revolves like that, points near and far from the center describe circles of different radii in the same time; their motion varies according to these radii and is proportionately quick or slow. This motion gives rise to all sorts of wonderful phenomena, because these points simultaneously traverse circles of large and small circumference at proportionately high or low speeds — an effect one might have expected to be impossible. (893c7–d5)

The Stranger's interest in high and low speeds shows that the activity sense is the wrong way to read these comments. Rather than regarding the disk as a unified whole whose rotation is at every moment complete, the Stranger separates the various points and radii on his disk, measuring and comparing their movements. If there is any separation of Lee's two senses here, it can only favor the accomplishment sense. And since the quoted passage introduces the Stranger's concern with rotation, and he says nothing later to indicate that he is thinking of rotation in another way, it follows that he is not thinking of the activity sense, since that would allow no measurements or comparisons.

Further, in the comparison between reason and rotation at 898, Lee's proposal makes it hard to see why the Stranger mentions rotation "in the same direction" (Lee's translation of  $\pi\rho\delta\varsigma\ \tau\acute{\alpha}\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}$ ). If the point were to see what is at the center from every possible perspective, one would rather wish to rotate in *both* directions, for the same sequence of objects can look notoriously different when taken in a

different order.<sup>40</sup> And this point too, favors the accomplishment, not the activity, sense. For the activity sense refuses to regard the disk or sphere as containing parts; it is all one unified whole. But if the point of the image is to see an object (in this case the disk or sphere) from all perspectives, one will need to pay attention to the *differences* between all those points or parts, and to the different ways the center appears from each position on the disk or sphere.

As Lee acknowledges, Aristotle takes Plato's view to be that the soul's motion is a motion in space. I do not wish to take any more detailed position here on Aristotle's arguments at *de Anima* I.3.407a2–b11, but whether or not his arguments hit their targets when examined in detail, his broad assumption that Plato's view commits him to the soul's movement through space is clear.

The Stranger's comments on soul are in many ways hard to pin down. But when he compares reason to rotation, and enumerates the six ways in which the two phenomena resemble each other, he shows that he is thinking of reason as a specifically spatial motion. It follows that soul or souls move spatially if and when they reason, and this makes it likely that the other activities of souls are also spatial motions. As we saw in Chapter 2, Plato thinks of motion as either round, straight, or a combination of the two. So if reason is rotational motion, irrational thinking must add a component of straightness to a soul's motions. This is just what Timaeus claims about irrational humans and other animals in his speech.

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<sup>40</sup>Think, for example, of driving a road one knows from traveling it in one direction, but now proceeding in the opposite direction.

### 3.3 *Timaeus*

#### Introduction

The spatial movements of souls are woven so tightly into Timaeus' account that they must be read literally. The alternative, supposing that Timaeus' many descriptions of souls moving in space actually mean something else, denatures too large a portion of the text. Second, Timaeus' comments imply that souls are *self-movers*. The *Timaeus* therefore contains the same claims that we found in the *Phaedrus* and the *Laws*.

A number of writers have denied that the motions of souls referred to by Timaeus are literally spatial, while recently there has been a trend in the opposite direction.<sup>41</sup> On both sides, however, there has been a tendency to affirm and deny without assembling evidence or making one's reasoning explicit. The significance of my argument, therefore, comes less from the novelty of the conclusion than from spelling out the reasons by which I arrive there.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Those reading the motions of souls figuratively: Brisson (1994, p. 94), Lee (1976, p. 85 and n. 28), Cherniss (1944, pp. 405–406), Skemp (1942, pp. 79 and 86), Cornford (1937, p. 93), Taylor (1928, p. 175) and Archer-Hind (1888, p. 116). Those reading them as motions in space: Johansen (2004, pp. 139–140), Sorabji (2003, p. 152), O'Brien (2003), Burnyeat (2000, pp. 58–59), Gould (1963, p. 128). O'Brien does not affirm this explicitly, but his argument seems to require it, since he claims that the placement of the World Soul *outside* the body of the world is Plato's response to Empedocles' metaphysics, in which the principle of Strife is located outside the world when Love is in control of the universe. Since O'Brien thinks the World Soul is located in space, it is likely that he also thinks the World Soul's motions are spatial.

<sup>42</sup>Sedley (1997, pp. 329–330) gives detailed reasons that souls move spatially, but my arguments go beyond those given there in both detail and variety.

## How to Approach the Problem

I assume there is no dispute that according to Timaeus' account, souls (including the World Soul and human souls) rotate in space: disagreement arises when we ask whether this account is itself to be taken literally or figuratively.<sup>43</sup> Some find the claim that souls move in space bizarre, perhaps thinking it an advantage if we can absolve Plato from this idea.<sup>44</sup>

I will not try to decide what status to assign Timaeus' account as a whole. This would involve many issues we can pass by here, such as whether the account of the universe's creation is to be taken literally, whether the universe has always existed (according to Timaeus' account), and what Timaeus means by calling his account a "likely story" (εἰκὼς μῦθος). Instead, I propose to take the many references to spatial motion by souls as a group, and ask whether this set of claims is better taken literally or figuratively, taking into account only considerations related to this group itself. Now of course some of the things Timaeus says are figurative: no one thinks that the Demiurge reaches for a real mixing-bowl (κρατῆρα, 41d4) in which to whip up his recipe for the World Soul, for example. But myths are not arguments, so we cannot infer that because one element of a myth is not to

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<sup>43</sup>One might also think Timaeus can be read as saying that souls are in spatial rotation while they reside within bodies, but only figuratively in motion when disembodied. I doubt whether Timaeus' account leaves any room for souls that are disembodied in every sense, for there are no empty spaces in Timaeus' universe. So every soul will be, at the least, co-located with some body. Beyond this, I see no evidence for treating disembodied souls differently from embodied ones. Since the only evidence available claims that souls are in spatial rotation, we should adopt this reading for all cases.

<sup>44</sup>Granted, Plato's texts contain much that is bizarre. But the scholars I have in mind suppose, I suppose, that the myths need not be given the same interpretive weight as the more argumentative passages. I take no position on this approach here; my point is just that some have found the claim that souls move through space — a claim found outside as well as within the mythical passages — too bizarre to attribute to a great philosopher.

be taken literally, some other element, even one depending on it, should not be taken literally either, since the dependence involved is not the logical kind. So the figurative status of some parts of Timaeus' account cannot decide what we should think about his claims that souls rotate. To decide how to take this group of claims, we must look for other arguments.

### Evidence for Spatial Motion

I begin by surveying passages in which Timaeus either says or takes for granted that souls move spatially.<sup>45</sup> For there are simply too many such passages in the *Timaeus* for them to be taken plausibly as symbolic of something non-spatial, especially since, as we will see in the following section, there are no proposals on the table specifying what this something could be. If Timaeus referred only occasionally to souls moving spatially, and if these passages were peripheral to the main concerns of the dialogue, then one might think that spatial motion, like the single mention of the Demiurge's mixing bowl, is not a feature of the account we are meant to take seriously. But since Timaeus refers to souls moving spatially many times, and these passages include many important parts of his speech, it is not plausible to suppose that all these references really mean something else — especially since we have nothing to fill in the “something else” with. Moreover, the suggestion that spatial motion symbolizes “change” in general will not work in this dialogue either.

When Timaeus begins to describe the creation of the World Soul, he says that the god “extended [the soul] throughout the whole body” (34b3–4).<sup>46</sup> Shortly af-

<sup>45</sup>The survey will not be exhaustive, but includes the most significant passages from the *Timaeus*.

<sup>46</sup>On a related issue, Archer-Hind points out that the soul is supposed to be interfused through-

terward, he repeats that the World Soul is located throughout the body of the universe “from the center on out in every direction to the outermost limit of the heavens,” and adds that the soul rotates within itself (36e2–4).<sup>47</sup> Burnyeat writes of this passage, “The spatial language is unmistakable. Soul, both human and divine, has extension in three dimensions.”<sup>48</sup> Johansen takes the same view:

For Timaeus, then, thinking is a form of circular motion. This position is likely to strike us as odd, to say the least...At this point it is tempting to say, with many scholars, that the language of cyclical motion is merely an image. Thinking is not literally a circular motion, it is only like it in certain respects. However, unless we take the circular motions of the soul literally we have no way of understanding how the soul moves round with the planets. The circular motions of the planets are also the motions of the thinking world soul...Here there seems no alternative to taking the notion of thinking as circular motion literally.<sup>49</sup>

Johansen’s argument can be repeated for most of the passages I will mention: it is hard to make sense of any of them unless the motions of souls are literally spatial.

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out the universe’s body, so it is puzzling that the soul is also described as forming two intersecting circles. His solution is to “regard the two circles simply as a framework...denoting the directions of the two movements. (Archer-Hind 1888, p. 112 ad 2). Cornford’s interpretation is based on the axiom that the motions of the World Soul and those of the body of the universe must be the same, but he nevertheless denies that the motions of the World Soul are spatial. I believe this is an inconsistent position. (Cornford 1937, pp. 78–93)

<sup>47</sup>Carone notes that the rotation of the World Soul implies space. But she goes on to argue that space implies body because there is no void in Plato’s universe. Fronterotta rightly rejects the latter claim: Carone (2005, p. 44), Fronterotta (2007, p. 232). The mistake in Carone’s reasoning is that while any space must have some body filling it, it does not follow that if a soul and a body occupy the same space, the soul must *occupy* that body. It is at least possible to hold that souls and bodies can be (merely) co-located, where this is a less intimate relation than that of a soul’s *occupying* a body. Aristotle takes the motions of the World Soul as spatial: *de Anima* 407a1, as does Karfik (2005, p. 198) and Karfik (2004, p. 177).

<sup>48</sup>He adds, “This does not make it corporeal...Soul...as a non-corporeal thing, must be invisible and intangible, without secondary qualities. But this is compatible with its having extension in three dimensions and primary qualities such as size or shape — just like the abstract, non-sensible objects of solid geometry.” (Burnyeat 2000, pp. 58–59)

<sup>49</sup>Johansen (2004, pp. 139–140)

Some writers also note that the composition of the World Soul is guided by an axiom, taken over from Pre-Socratic philosophers, that “like is known by like.”<sup>50</sup> Timaeus invokes this principle in his explanation of eyesight (ὅμοιον πρὸς ὅμοιον, 45c4). If Timaeus uses this principle, it is also likely that souls have spatial properties, since otherwise they will not be like visible things: they will not share location, or size, or shape, or direction, or any secondary quality. One goal we can reasonably attribute to Timaeus is to explain how souls are capable of knowing things in the visible world, and this goal requires him to find some common ground between visible things and souls. Spatial properties are a reasonable solution to this problem.<sup>51</sup> Spatial location and motion are two of a limited number of candidates for the common properties, then, and the only two for which there is good textual evidence that Timaeus attributes them to souls.

At 41d4–42e4 Timaeus shifts his focus from divine souls to the creation of individual human souls.<sup>52</sup> The Demiurge tells the lesser souls they will be responsible for dragging “that massive accretion of fire-water-air-earth into conformity with the revolution of the Same and uniform within him, and so [of subduing] that turbulent, irrational mass by means of reason” (42c–d). The spatial reading is easier for this passage: the instruction to humans (and other creatures) to put their bodies in “conformity” with the revolutions of the Same within themselves is clearer

<sup>50</sup>Cornford (1937, p. 94). Guthrie refers to the Pythagoreans and Empedocles for the view that like is known by like: Guthrie (1962, Volume I, pp. 206 and 209).

<sup>51</sup>It is, of course, unclear to what extent Timaeus thinks souls can know anything about the visible world. Surely he thinks there are serious limits on this kind of knowledge, but he must also think that souls can make true claims about the visible world. For my argument here, I only need to claim that Timaeus thinks souls capable of have *some* level of true belief about the visible world.

<sup>52</sup>Taylor suggests that the point of having the Demiurge start fresh, with new ingredients of the same composition as the World Soul, is to make clear that human souls are neither emanations nor parts of the World Soul. (Taylor 1928, p. 255)



if the revolution in question is spatial. The Demiurge's instruction does not become completely clear if we assume that the revolutions of the Same are spatial; nevertheless, it is much more clear than the alternative. What is clear in this passage is that the Demiurge is urging the lesser creatures to master their emotions, rather than being mastered by them.<sup>53</sup> The murky part of the passage, then, lies in just how the spatial movement of the Same and uniform on the one hand, and the spatial movements of the creature's body, on the other, are related when the creature masters its emotions, or when the opposite happens. But it seems clear enough that the creatures are being instructed to make some aspect of their bodies similar to, or the same as, some aspect of the revolution of the Same. The crude version of the thought here is: when the body moves like the revolution of the Same, one masters the emotions; when the body moves differently from it, one is mastered by them.

Now if the revolution of the Same is spatial, it is at least clear what the body is being compared to, even though it remains unclear what respect the comparison focuses on. If, on the other hand, the revolutions of the Same are not spatial motions, but generic changes, the instruction becomes so vague that it is hard to imagine an interpretation on which it makes a substantive point. For on this view, we do not even know what *kind* of changes the "Same and uniform" undergoes, or can undergo, and without this basic parameter, we cannot know even vaguely what the creatures are supposed to do with their own bodies in order to overcome emotion. The non-spatial reading leaves us completely in the dark about what the

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<sup>53</sup>"And if they could master these emotions, their lives would be just, whereas if they were mastered by them, they would be unjust." ὥν εἰ μὲν κρατήσοιεν, δίκη βιώσονται, κρατηθέντες δὲ ἀδίκημα, 42b2.

Demiurge means, whereas the text suggests that the Demiurge is trying to *simplify* his instructions, to make them easier to follow rather than more mysterious.

Finally, on the assumption that the revolutions of the Same are *not* spatial, but generic changes, “revolutions of the Same” turns out to mean something like “changes of the Same.” This is not necessarily self-contradictory, but will require careful explanation to avoid contradiction. And as we will see below, while a number of authors have proposed that the soul’s motions are not spatial, but generic changes, no one has offered to explain what kind of changes these could be, or what these passages mean when read in that way. We need some proposal to give this formula content. I leave it to advocates of reading κίνησις as “change” to propose a reading on which this passage asserts something meaningful.

Again at 43c–44c, Timaeus describes the souls of mortal creatures as overwhelmed by the things flowing in from outside their bodies. These external streams “strike against” (προσπίπτειν, 43c5) the soul, knocking its circles out of their proper paths.<sup>54</sup> Timaeus then (44d) explains that the human head was made spherical in order to imitate the shape of the universe, and locates the divine part of the soul within the head. The soul thus has a location in space, and since the universe is described as “revolving” (περιφερές, 44d4), it is hard to resist the conclusion that the soul also revolves in space.<sup>55</sup> It is not much of a step from admitting that souls

<sup>54</sup>Also reading the passage this way are Karfik (2005, pp. 201 and 204–207), Johansen (2004, p. 139 n. 5).

<sup>55</sup>Sedley notes this passage in support of the claim that human souls move in space: Sedley (1997, p. 330). Although Cornford does not agree that souls have spatial motion, he does note at this point that Plato takes the design of the human body seriously, and that the main idea of this section is the comparison between the motions of the human body and those of the universe. (Cornford 1937, p. 151) Karfik seems to read the motions of souls as literally spatial: Karfik (2005, p. 200). Thein, discussing a distinct question, denies that this passage shows that the Intelligible Living Thing is spherical, but says nothing directly about whether human souls are spherical: Thein (2006, pp. 257–258).

have location in space to allowing them to move in space (if they could not, each soul would have to be permanently fixed in a single location — which is hardly plausible). Finally, Timaeus makes the same point again at 47b–c when he speaks about sight: the gods gave us the power to see so that we might “observe the orbits of intelligence in the heavens and apply them to the revolutions (περιφορὰς) of our own understanding.” This seems to mean that we are to observe the circular motions in the heavens and try to make the motions in our heads as similar as possible. If our souls do not literally revolve in our heads, then Timaeus is guilty of leaving out a crucial part of the explanation he is offering.<sup>56</sup>

Timaeus describes plants at 77a–c. Plants are alive, of course, and in virtue of this they must have some kind of soul. But their souls are of the same type as the lowest of the types given to humans, “the type that our account has situated between the midriff and the navel.” This accounts for the facts that plants cannot reason or reflect, and cannot move themselves. Here Timaeus seems to say that it is because their souls do not rotate that plants are incapable of moving their bodies:

...its formation has not entrusted it with a natural ability to discern and reflect upon any of its own characteristics, by revolving within and about itself...Hence (διὸ) it is alive...but it stays put, standing fixed and rooted, since (διὰ) it lacks self-motion. (77b7–c5)<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Sedley (1997, pp. 329–330)

<sup>57</sup>Scholars have taken several views of what this passage says: Archer-Hind supposes that although plants cannot locomote, they can move within themselves. Taylor thinks plants have a very limited kind of self-motion, consisting of responses to external stimuli. Cornford takes the passage to mean that plants cannot move themselves, but says they must nevertheless have some kind of self-motion, since this is the definition of soul. Broadie writes that “for [Plato] the power of autonomous locomotion entails possession of reason.” Archer-Hind (1888, p. 288), Taylor (1928, p. 543), Cornford (1937, p. 303), Broadie (2003, p. 29). The final sentence may shift its subject from the

Timaeus says here that the power of self-locomotion in a body depends on having a soul that moves itself. This statement does not *entail* that he is thinking of souls as moving spatially, but this is the most natural and straightforward way of taking his claims.

This is the best place to notice a puzzle raised by this passage as well: Timaeus refers to the souls of plants, and apparently thinks of soul as self-moving, but also denies that plant souls have self-motion (“since [the plant’s soul] lacks self-motion,” διὰ τὸ τῆς ὕφ’ ἑαυτοῦ κινήσεως ἔστερῆσθαι, 77c4–5). To preserve consistency, it must be the case either that what plants have (and by extension the lowest part of human “souls” as well) is not, strictly speaking, a soul, or that Timaeus does not subscribe to the definition of souls as self-movers. If I am right, then, the lowest part of the human soul is not really a soul at all, but may be given that name here either *causa honoris*, or because no better name is available. Perhaps the reason is that what plants have is, strictly, the lowest component of a full soul. In general a part of a thing X need not itself be an X, so it is plausible that plant “souls” are not real souls, but only soul-parts. They may be enough to confer life, but insufficient to confer the other properties of things with complete souls.

Near the end of the dialogue Timaeus says, “the best of the motions is one that occurs within oneself and is caused by oneself,” adding that this kind of motion “bears the greatest kinship to understanding and to the motion of the universe” (89a1–3).<sup>58</sup> The fact that Timaeus compares self-motion both to understanding

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entire plant to the plant’s soul: the plant as a whole is alive, but stays rooted in one place, since its soul lacks self-motion. Although Timaeus does not signal the shift of subject explicitly, this reading saves his sentence from redundancy, since the alternative reading would be: “the plant as a whole is alive, but stays rooted in one place since the plant as a whole cannot move itself.”

<sup>58</sup>Taylor draws the natural conclusion that what makes this kind of motion best is that moving oneself physically is an imitation of the soul’s self-movement. Taylor (1928, p. 626)

and to the motion of the universe suggests that he is thinking of all three instances as belonging to the same kind. Since the motion of the universe is spatial, the other two types are also spatial.

Timaeus recommends that the only way to care for anything is to provide it with the “nourishment and the motions that are proper to it. And the motions that have an affinity to the divine part within us are the thoughts and revolutions of the universe (αἱ τοῦ παντὸς διανοήσεις καὶ περιφοραί)” (90c6–d1). The way Timaeus joins “thoughts and revolutions” here shows again that he thinks of them as members of the same type, namely spatial motions.

I have cited many examples here, perhaps past the reader’s patience. But the multiplication of cases is part of my argument: although it is true that none of these passages provides an absolutely sure argument that soul-motions are spatial, it is important to take stock of how often these claims occur in Timaeus’ speech. His treatment of soul-motions as spatial is constant and pervasive. We can now ask whether these statements are best read literally, or if this is all part of the imagistic, non-literal part of Timaeus’ account, like the Demiurge’s mixing-bowl. The difference between these passages and the mixing-bowl should now be clear: the κρατῆρα is mentioned once only, and Timaeus makes no significant claim that cannot be formulated without mentioning it. The spatial motions of souls, however, are mentioned many times, and form part of many significant claims in the dialogue. Anyone proposing that these are not literally spatial motions should explain what equally specific idea they express; without such a proposal, such a reading reduces a relatively more clear and specific set of claims to pretty imagery

standing for nothing.<sup>59</sup>

## Evidence for Self-Motion

Finally, it is not difficult to show that Timaeus thinks of souls as *self*-locomotors, not just as locomotors. At 37b5 Timaeus, speaking about the circles of the Same and Different within the World Soul, refers to what is happening “within the self-moved thing” (ἐν τῷ κινουμένῳ ὑφ’ αὐτοῦ). He is clearly referring to the World Soul as moving itself.<sup>60</sup> It is therefore likely that he thinks of all souls this way. For while Timaeus never defines soul, it is a fair assumption that if he thinks self-movement is an important property of one soul, he attributes the same property to all souls. His comments on plants, too, when they explain lack of bodily locomotion by the fact that plants’ souls lack the power of self-motion, imply that all other souls have this power. So these two texts each reveal that Timaeus attributes self-motion to souls.

## Non-Spatial Readings

A number of scholars have thought that the motion of souls cannot be spatial. Thus, for example, Archer-Hind:

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<sup>59</sup>Johansen writes, “...for Timaeus the motions of body and mind both fall under a general mechanics explaining the motions of extended figures (whether two- or three-dimensional) in space.” (Johansen 2004, p. 142)

<sup>60</sup>Most scholars have agreed that this is a reference to the World Soul, meaning that Timaeus thinks of the World Soul as a self-mover. Those reading the reference as to the World Soul: Karfik (2005, p. 215 n. 90), Carone (2005, pp. 47 and 214 n. 93). Only Cornford has suggested that the reference is to the universe’s body, but agrees that if this is right, the body’s movement is due to the World Soul: Cornford (1937, p. 94 n. 2). Taylor notes that there is no mention of the definition of souls as self-movers when the Demiurge makes the World Soul (35a–b), but nevertheless thinks that, according to Timaeus, self-movement is a *proprium* of souls: Taylor (1928, p. 178).

Plato does not of course mean that the immaterial and indivisible essence of soul is composed of circles and distributed in mathematical proportions. The circle is with him a common symbol of the activity of thought: and by assigning the harmonic numbers to soul he declares that whatever relations or harmonies, mathematical or otherwise, are found in the world of space and time, these are the natural expression in material terms of some eternal law of soul.<sup>61</sup>

And Skemp:

Plato regards the activity of thought as a κίνησις, not in space and so not bodily, whose εἰκών is the rotation of a sphere.<sup>62</sup>

While the predominant reading of the soul's κίνησις in the first three quarters of the twentieth century was figurative, interpretations in this tradition said nothing specific about what Timaeus or Plato was trying to express with the image of circular motion in souls.<sup>63</sup> We thus have Archer-Hind suggesting that spatial motion represents "some eternal law of soul," and Skemp who is wholly silent on what kind of κίνησις is meant if not bodily or spatial movement. This is the first problem with this reading: as we have seen, Timaeus draws on the claim that souls move spatially at many points in his speech. If these are all reduced to the bland and uninformative claim that there is "some eternal law" of souls, the text suffers

<sup>61</sup>Archer-Hind (1888, p. 114). Since he denies that souls are literally composed of circles, his denial presumably extends to the claim that those circles rotate. It is puzzling, then, that Archer-Hind writes in the same commentary, "In the Timaeus...there is a necessity for assigning to the κόσμος the unchanging motion of the Same." (Archer-Hind 1888, p. 103) This is puzzling because it assumes that the motions of the cosmos (κόσμος) and the Same belong to the same type. And since the motion of the κόσμος is locomotive revolution, it should follow that the Same experiences the same kind of motion. But this is just what Archer-Hind denies in the quotation above.

<sup>62</sup>Skemp (1942, p. 86). For similar views, see Ross (1961, p. 189), Lee (1976, pp. 84–86), Cherniss (1944, pp. 405–406).

<sup>63</sup>One might think, for example, that the circular imagery is meant to symbolize perfection. But this will not account for the large number of varied and specific claims Timaeus chooses to cast in circular terms.

the equivalent of reducing a color photograph to black and white. It is hard to believe that this claim, on which Plato has Timaeus place so much weight and return to so often, carries no substantive information about Timaeus' thought.<sup>64</sup>

In the same vein, Brisson and Cornford agree that the reason the World Soul's center is put at the world's center is so that it can communicate its movement to the world as efficiently as possible.<sup>65</sup> But, Brisson concludes, "...on ne doit pas en inférer...que l'âme a quelque chose à voir avec l'extension."<sup>66</sup> But other things being equal, the co-location of the soul and body only helps explain the transmission of motion from one to the other if what is transmitted is spatial motion.<sup>67</sup> Otherwise the theory would also need to explain how "soul-motions" are also *transformed* into spatial motions as they are transmitted, and why it is the case that having co-located centers makes this transformation more efficacious. We can add a narrower argument against Brisson's suggestion as well: if Brisson's thought is that soul-motions (which, on his view, are non-spatial) are somehow transformed into spatial motions as they are transmitted to the body of the universe, it is hard to see why the World Soul's center should be placed at the center of the universe's body, unless the World Soul is itself extended.

The motivation of these scholars (I speculate) is, perhaps, to avoid what they see as the unacceptably bizarre claim that souls literally move in space. But while

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<sup>64</sup>Cf. remarks by Lee, referring to Aristotle's criticisms of Plato's image of rotation: "He [Aristotle] was even in some ways doing Plato more credit than do many of Plato's defenders, for whom the white flag of 'mythical language' seems to place the *validity* or defensibility of Plato's notions hors du combat." Lee (1976, p. 99 n. 29).

<sup>65</sup>Brisson (1994, p. 94), Cornford (1937, p. 93)

<sup>66</sup>Brisson (1994, p. 339)

<sup>67</sup>This point is also made by Archer-Hind, who says that since in the *Timaeus* the distinction between spirit and matter is obliterated, it is necessary to give both the same motions. But he then (inconsistently) denies that soul is extended: Archer-Hind (1888, pp. 102 and 104).



this claim is difficult to explain, it fits Timaeus' and Plato's other statements better than the non-spatial reading. Let us follow the same strategy as earlier sections of this chapter, comparing what the two approaches say about Timaeus' view that souls are self-movers.

Grant for the moment that souls are referred to as self-movers by Timaeus. The claim means one of the following:

1. Souls cause themselves to move through space.
2. Souls cause themselves to change.

Much remains obscure on either version, but the implications of the two differ by enough to prefer the former over the latter. To see the difference, consider this passage:

And he [the Demiurge] bestowed two movements upon each of them [the fixed stars]. The first was rotation, an unvarying movement in the same place, by which the god would always think the same thoughts about the same things. The other was revolution, a forward motion under the dominance of the circular carrying movement of the Same and uniform. With respect to the other five motions the gods are immobile and stationary, in order that each of them may come as close as possible to attaining perfection. κινήσεις δὲ δύο προσῆψεν ἑκάστῳ, τὴν μὲν ἐν ταύτῳ κατὰ ταῦτά, περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν αἰὲν τὰ αὐτὰ ἑαυτῷ διανοομένῳ, τὴν δὲ εἰς τὸ πρόσθεν, ὑπὸ τῆς ταύτου καὶ ὁμοίου περιφορᾶς κρατουμένῳ· τὰς δὲ πέντε κινήσεις ἀκίνητον καὶ ἐστός, ἵνα ὅτι μάλιστα αὐτῶν ἕκαστον γένοιτο ὡς ἄριστον. (40a7–b4)

Timaeus assigns two motions to each star, both circular, but only the first, rotation, constitutes the thinking of these gods. The second, revolution, somehow puts the

gods “under the dominance of...the Same and uniform,” but apparently does not itself constitute thinking. The final sentence, specifying that the other five kinds of motion are not given to these gods, shows that all these are all spatial motions.

Now Timaeus says that the reason these gods have none of the other five motions is to bring them as close to perfection as possible. There is reason, albeit a somewhat speculative one, to think that it is the second motion that limits the gods’ perfection here, rather than the first. For in the myth of the *Statesman* we will see that rotation *in a single direction* is treated as a *perfect* imitation of the Demiurge. So if the gods discussed here are less than perfect, this may be in virtue of their revolutions, not their rotation.

We have, tentatively, isolated the motion identified with thinking in this passage as rotation.<sup>68</sup> Now Timaeus says that rotation guarantees that these gods will “always think the same thoughts about the same things.” I do not pretend to understand what connection Plato saw between rotation and thinking: the passage treats them as identical, but how or why is not explained at all.<sup>69</sup> But we can ask which interpretation this claim fits better, the view that souls cause themselves to rotate in space, or that they cause themselves to change.

There is a simple, direct, and obvious sense in which spatial rotation resembles “always think[ing] the same thoughts about the same things,” namely that rotation is an unvarying and uniform motion.<sup>70</sup> As an object rotates, it repeats the

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<sup>68</sup>The following argument goes through in much the same way even if one thinks that thinking consists of both motions, rather than just the first. The assumption that thinking is identical with rotation simplifies the argument, so I will proceed as if this point is established.

<sup>69</sup>Cf. Lee: “He is not ‘explaining’ his analogy here, but merely expressing it, as he had done before, and presupposing its validity.” (Lee 1976, pp. 72–73)

<sup>70</sup>It seems clear that Timaeus in this passage and the Stranger at *Laws* 893c–d are speaking of rotation *in a single direction and at constant speed*, although they do not state this explicitly.

same motion indefinitely. If we grant Timaeus his assumption that spatial motion is identical to thinking, then it is easy to see how he can arrive at the thought that to repeat the same spatial motions is to think the same thoughts.<sup>71</sup> And since rotation is apparently special for Timaeus because it repeats itself indefinitely, while straight-line motions must either stop or bend at some point, there is a natural fit between the claim that these gods always think the same thoughts about the same things and the view that their thinking consists of rotation in space.<sup>72</sup>

But on the second, non-spatial version of the view, souls are self-changers. This produces an immediate tension, or perhaps even a contradiction, between souls as self-changers and Timaeus' assertion that the motion (read "change") of these gods is identical to their thinking. For the following set of claims is inconsistent:

1. The fixed gods always think the same thoughts about the same things.
2. The fixed gods always move, that is, cause themselves to change.

The explanation of motion in the second point is supposed to be equivalent to the gods' thinking.

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<sup>71</sup>We might compare the identification of motion and thought in the Platonic texts to contemporary physicalist claims that mental events (or properties) are identical to physical events (or properties). At a sufficiently general level, this position too claims that thinking is identical with certain motions. This does not, of course, render Plato's texts any less opaque to us, but it argues for more patience if we find Timaeus' position bizarre. It is, after all, possible both to believe that (some version of) contemporary physicalism is the best theory of mind, and also to find it bizarre; I take it that something like this combination of thoughts lies behind the common appellation "the hard problem."

<sup>72</sup>Cherniss takes the view that "axial rotation...is the physical result of self-consistent thought about unchanging objects." (Cherniss 1944, p. 404 n. 331) He thus seems to say that there is a natural fit between the two phenomena, but also to maintain that thought is something other than spatial motion, not identical to it, since on his view thought *produces*, and is therefore distinct from, spatial motion.

I see two ways of parsing this non-spatial reading, neither leading to a workable result. First, the changes involved might be limited in number, and the gods, perhaps, change the states they occupy among the available options. For example, the gods might change themselves constantly by continuously alternating between red and blue. So the gods could cause themselves to change constantly, and these motions could be equivalent to their thinking. On a reading like this it will be clear how Timaeus can say that these gods “always think the same thoughts about the same things.” The faults of this approach, however, are obvious: there is no textual support for this approach, it introduces arbitrary lists of changes and limitations on them, and it can provide no account of why *these* changes should be equivalent to thinking. If one is worried that making spatial motion equivalent to thinking is bizarre, this is clearly worse.

Second, one might opt for the completely general sense of “change,” so that the gods’ motions consist of any and all changes of state. This reading has some of the problems just listed, but its main fault is other: there is a tension, possibly a contradiction, between the claims that the gods think the same thoughts about the same things, the claim that they continually change themselves, and the claim that their movements (changes) are equivalent to their thinking. For it is hard to see how items in the set of the gods’ thoughts can stay the same while the gods’ movements, and therefore their mental states, constantly change.

Since the non-spatial alternative has these problems, while the spatial reading lacks them, we should read κίνησις as spatial motion in the *Timaeus* as well. Since this result applies to the souls of the fixed stars, which are gods, this is likely Timaeus’ view about all souls: there is no reason to think he treats mortal souls

differently from divine ones when discussing basic characteristics such as these. Contrary to what some have thought, then, the most embarrassing reading to attribute to Plato is the one that denies the literalness of the claim that souls move through space.

### 3.4 *Statesman* 269a–274e

The myth at *Statesman* 269a–274e does not say directly that mental activities are motions, but one of the myth's claims entails this. This passage also treats uniform rotation in the same direction as satisfying the predicate *remaining in the same state*. This is a surprising move, given that Platonic texts such as the *Phaedo* and *Republic* seem committed to treating *any* spatial motion as a change in state. I will not attempt any larger-scale diagnosis of what this shift means. That it is a different treatment of rotation seems clear; whether it signifies a promotion of rotation to a higher rank or a loosening of the concept of changelessness would require a more wide-ranging investigation than space permits here.

At 268c the Eleatic Visitor tells Theaetetus that they have not yet defined the Statesman fully, because they have described him without ruling out a number of other experts who might be confused with him. He proposes to tell a story, promising that it will prove useful in carrying out this next step. The myth he tells says that the universe turns sometimes in one direction and sometimes in the other. During some of these periods (such as the one we are now living in), the sun and stars turn from east to west, and people grow older with time, while during the other periods, the heavens rotate in the opposite direction and people

spring out of the earth and grow younger with time.<sup>73</sup> The important feature of the story for my argument is the reason given by the Visitor that the universe could not go on turning in the same direction all the time: if it were to do so, it would be too similar to “the most divine things of all.”

VISITOR: Remaining permanently in the same state and condition, and being permanently the same, belongs only to the most divine things of all, and by its nature body is not of this order...In consequence it is impossible for it [sc. the cosmos] to be altogether exempt from change, although as far as possible, given its capacities, it moves in the same place, in the same way, with a single motion; and this is why it has reverse-rotation<sup>74</sup> as its lot, which is the smallest possible variation of its movement. To turn itself by itself forever is, I dare say, impossible for anything except the one who guides all things that are in movement...(269d5–e6, Rowe’s translation slightly modified) ΞΕ. Τὸ

κατὰ ταῦτὰ καὶ ὡσαύτως ἔχειν αἰεὶ καὶ ταῦτὸν εἶναι τοῖς πάντων θειοτάτοις προσήκει μόνοις, σώματος δὲ φύσις οὐ ταύτης τῆς τάξεως...ὅθεν αὐτῷ μεταβολῆς ἀμοίρῳ γίγνεσθαι διὰ παντὸς ἀδύνατον, κατὰ δύναμιν γε μὴν ὅτι μάλιστα ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ κατὰ ταῦτὰ μίαν φορὰν κινεῖται· διὸ τὴν ἀνακύκλησιν εἴληχεν, ὅτι σμικροτάτην τῆς αὐτοῦ<sup>75</sup> κινήσεως παράλλαξιν. αὐτὸ δὲ ἑαυτὸ στρέφειν αἰεὶ σχεδὸν οὐδενὶ δυνατὸν πλὴν τῷ τῶν κινουμένων αὐτῶν πάντων ἡγουμένῳ·

This passage is surprising for the claim that rotation in the same direction would

<sup>73</sup>Skemp and Taylor discuss the features this myth shares with the *Timaeus* and *Phaedrus*; they find important differences as well as many basic similarities in the astronomy and cosmology, especially when comparing the *Statesman* and *Timaeus*. What matters for my argument is that all three dialogues claim that souls are in motion insofar as they think. Skemp (1962, pp. 89–90), Taylor (1961, pp. 206–210).

<sup>74</sup>The word translated as “reverse-rotation” (or variants with the same meaning) by most translators, ἀνακύκλησιν, is taken by Delcomminette instead as “le mouvement circulaire recurrent”. That is, he explains the prefix ἀνα- by the fact that circular movement keeps returning to spaces already traversed. I follow the more usual understanding of this passage, on which “ἀνακύκλησιν” means the universe periodically reverses its direction of rotation. Note that Delcomminette’s reading violates the Stranger’s explanation in the text, since it leaves both the universe and “the one who guides all things” both turning in a single direction forever. (Delcomminette 2000, p. 176 n. 46)

<sup>75</sup>I follow the manuscript reading αὐτοῦ rather than Robinson’s emendation πρὸ τοῦ.

amount to “remaining permanently in the same state and condition.” One would have expected that rotation, being a kind of motion,<sup>76</sup> would suffice to put the rotating thing in a different state than “the most divine things of all.” But instead we learn that the universe must change the direction in which it rotates in order to be in a different state from those divine things.

The first question in understanding the claim is what the divine things are that the universe is not allowed to resemble too closely. Whatever these things are, the passage asserts that they are in permanent rotation in a single direction. There are two candidates: “the god” of this myth (perhaps along with the other gods mentioned), and the Forms. There are two reasons that the Visitor must be referring to the god(s).<sup>77</sup> First, the Forms are never mentioned explicitly, either in the myth or in the whole dialogue.<sup>78</sup> Further, it would be hard to believe that the Forms are being said to rotate here without some corroborating evidence, preferably another text that said or implied this about the Forms.

Those who argue that the comparison is to the Forms usually base this view on the similarity of language used at 269d5 to that used to describe Forms in the *Phaedo* or *Timaeus*.<sup>79</sup> But if the comparison is between the body of the universe and the Forms, the Visitor has failed to give any reason that the universe must change the direction of its rotation. For there is no reason to think that the cosmos is in the “same state and condition” as the Forms in the first place, so reversing its direction of rotation does not lessen the (already non-existent) resemblance between

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<sup>76</sup>See Chapter 2, page 106, for Plato’s taxonomy of motions.

<sup>77</sup>Miller assumes this is the case as well: Miller (1980, p. 38).

<sup>78</sup>As Rosen recognizes at (1995, p. 45).

<sup>79</sup>It is often thought that the comparison is with Forms: Ricken (2008, p. 113), White (2007, p. 40), Plato (2003a, p. 227 n. 103), Delcomminette (2000, p. 181 n. 60), Robinson (1995a, p. 93), Rosen (1995, p. 45), Kahn (1992, p. 56).

them.<sup>80</sup> Since the Forms do not rotate, the universe could not come to resemble them too much by rotating in only one direction. So the comparison must be either to the god, or jointly to the god and the Forms, and either is sufficient to carry my point. Finally, while most scholars rely on similarity of language to conclude that the Visitor is referring to the Forms, the most natural thing to receive the epithet *θειότατος* (“god-like”) would be *ὁ θεός* or *οἱ θεοί* (“the god(s)”).

So the “most divine things” must be the god or gods mentioned throughout the myth. Since these gods are souls, the Visitor must think that these souls rotate just the way the body of the cosmos does. Otherwise, the cosmos would not need to change directions in order to differ in condition from the god(s). So the passage only makes sense if the souls of the gods rotate. Now it is possible to distinguish this claim logically from the claim that the mental activities of the gods are a kind of rotation, but it is hard to see any reason for doing so. If the Visitor holds that the souls of the gods are in rotation, then the gods’ mental activities must be a kind of motion as well.<sup>81</sup> For in the case of the gods, mental activity is identical with activity *tout court*.

There is, however, a way of reading the passage quoted above so that it contradicts my argument. The final sentence says that turning oneself forever is im-

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<sup>80</sup>Rowe also notes that this is what the Visitor promises to explain: Rowe (1995, p. 188 ad d2). Rosen writes, “The implication is evident: the gods are not the most divine of beings; not even the divine demiurge is of this order (*taksis*).” Rosen (1995, p. 45). Far from evident, this conclusion seems entirely unwarranted, since the word *taksis* is used to *separate* the universe from what is most divine on the grounds that the former has a body. So nothing follows about whether or not the Demiurge is part of what is most divine. White tries an explanation of the reverse rotation according to which the reversal is necessary because “such motion displays the ‘least deviation’ from the cosmic motion *instilled by the demiurge*.” White (2007, p. 41) (emphasis added). But the text does not say the universe has to vary the motion the Demiurge has given it; it says the universe cannot remain in the “same state and condition” as the Demiurge.

<sup>81</sup>Those agreeing that the god in the myth is in rotational motion: Miller (1980, p. 37), Taylor (1961, p. 275).



possible, “πλὴν τῷ τῶν κινουμένων αὖ πάντων ἡγουμένῳ.” Rowe translates this phrase, “except the one who guides all the things that, unlike him (αὖ), are in movement.” He thus takes αὖ to mark a contrast between the god and the things in movement which the god guides.<sup>82</sup> But this translation is not forced by the Greek, and produces nonsense when its implications are spelled out. For the whole sentence of which this phrase is a part says that this god is capable of turning himself by himself forever. On Rowe’s translation, then, the Visitor says that this god both is able to turn himself forever and is not in motion.<sup>83</sup> The statement would thus amount to a re-definition of motion, on which turning oneself forever does not count as a form of motion. Rowe’s approach thus arrives at a destination very close to my own by another path. Nevertheless, while I shall argue that my reading enacts a re-classification of rotation as “remaining permanently in the same state and condition, and being permanently the same,” Rowe’s translation simply contradicts itself, claiming at once that the god is and is not in motion.

One might try two arguments that this does not amount to a contradiction. First, the Visitor says merely that the god is capable (δυνατὸν) of turning himself forever, not that he actually does so. Being capable of some action, but not actually doing it, does not a contradiction make. But the Visitor is discussing his basic metaphysical assumptions here, and at this level it is much harder to draw a line between possibility and actuality. For example, at *Republic* 380c–381c Socrates argues that it is impossible for the gods to change themselves. His argument is not that the gods lack the power to change themselves, but that they are incapable of *wanting* to do so, since any change would have to be a change to a worse state, and

<sup>82</sup>His brief explanation of this interpretation is at (1995, p. 188 ad e6)

<sup>83</sup>The same point is made by Delcomminette at (2000, p. 177 n. 48)

they know this. Likewise here, if the god is capable of turning himself forever, but fails to do so, there would have to be some reason that this would be bad for him. And if it were bad for the god to turn himself forever in this way, then it would not be true that he *could* do it — in fact, he could not. So to say the god is able to do this is equivalent to saying that he does do it.

The other way of arguing that this is not a contradiction is to invoke the concept of “spiritual motion.”<sup>84</sup> This allows us to say that the motion of the body of the cosmos and the motion of the god are of two different kinds. So the Visitor says here that the god is not in physical motion as the body of the universe is; he does not deny (nor does he affirm) that the god is in spiritual motion. I objected to this distinction above, but there is a further reason that it will not work here: the Visitor’s stated reason that the body of the universe must change directions is that otherwise it would be in the *same* state as the god. If there are two senses of motion, the universe and the god would not be in the same state except analogously. And while the Visitor has announced that he is telling a story such as one tells children, he is arguing here, and thus needs the similarity between universe and god to be stronger than a mere analogy — he needs a real similarity. So this way of defending Rowe’s translation undermines the Visitor’s argument.

Delcomminette defends a strong version of this approach: he cordons off the movements of the soul as “d’ordre psychique,” and also denies that there is any reversal of the direction of the universe’s rotation. In his view, the argument of the passage runs:

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<sup>84</sup>For opposing views on this point see Ricken (2008, pp. 113–114), Delcomminette (2000, p. 177 n. 48), Skemp (1962, pp. 105–106).

...contrairement aux Idées, le monde ne reste pas toujours identique à lui-même ; il n'est donc pas éternel au sens strict du terme ; sa temporalité propre est bien plutôt la durée, ce qui signifie qu'il est en devenir. L'opposition entre le monde et les Idées ne recouvre pas deux types de mouvements, mais bien plutôt le changement et l'absence de changement, c'est-à-dire le devenir et l'éternité.<sup>85</sup>

I have two reasons for rejecting this reading. First, it has no explanation of why the Visitor says that ἀνακύκλησιν is the “smallest possible variation of its movement” (σμικροτάτην τῆς αὐτοῦ κινήσεως παράλλαξιν). This phrase must refer to something that admits of degrees. Delcomminette's proposal that he is referring only to the difference between absence of change and change fails this test, for any change at all differs by an equal amount from the state of not-changing-at-all. Second, nothing in the text supports the distinction between psychic and physical movement. And this proposal also makes it impossible to say why the universe must undergo any particular change rather than anything else as the “smallest possible variation of its movement.” For if the two types of motion share only the name “motion” but not its definition, there is again no way of determining what constitutes a greater or smaller difference between them: this would be like asking which differs more from a pumpkin, the color purple or the square root of three. To compare differences, they need to belong to some category in common, so that we can ask *how much* or *to what extent* the things share some property.

Fortunately, we need not translate the sentence to say that the god himself is not in motion. In the first place, the word αὐ need not indicate contrast: it may also signify merely that the speaker is adding something to his thought.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>Delcomminette (2000, p. 183)

<sup>86</sup>Liddell et al. (1996, s.v. αὐ II)

Alternatively, the force of αὖ in this sentence may simply be the contrast between the god, who can turn himself forever, and the things he guides, which cannot. Finally, if one insists that αὖ mark a contrast between the state of the god and the things he guides, we might take the contrast to be active versus passive, ἡγουμένῳ (active) versus κινουμένων (passive). That is, the contrast is that the body of the universe is moved, while the god moves himself. The placement of αὖ between the two participles and immediately after κινουμένων may favor this suggestion.<sup>87</sup>

Finally, the claim that the god's mind is in motion when it guides the universe in a circle is consistent with the imagery of the myth.<sup>88</sup> The Visitor says that the god sometimes accompanies [the universe], guiding it on its way and helping it move in a circle (269c4–5). On my proposal, the reason that the god only accompanies the universe at some times is that the god rotates unidirectionally. So when the universe's rotation is reversed, necessarily the universe and the god are moving in different directions. Later the Visitor describes the change of direction in the cosmos' rotation by saying that “the steersman of the universe let go — as it were — of the bar of the steering-oars and retired to his observation post” (272e3–5). This image is resumed a page later, with “the god...takes his position again at its steering-oars” (273d4–e2).<sup>89</sup>

The myth therefore contains a surprising new claim, namely that something

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<sup>87</sup>Campbell has a somewhat different reading: “αὖ implies a contrast between the divinest of all things and the leader of all that is in motion. As the former alone can remain always the same, so the latter alone can revolve spontaneously for ever.” (Campbell 1867, pp. 47–48). This reading does not, as far as I can see, fit the sentence in which αὖ occurs; even if it is accepted, however, my argument would still go through.

<sup>88</sup>Skemp also discusses the imagery of the god at the tiller, with conclusions similar to mine: Skemp (1962, p. 97).

<sup>89</sup>One could add the many elements of the *Statesman* myth that are identical with corresponding parts of the *Timaeus*. A thorough review of these is given by Brisson (1992, pp. 354–355).

causing itself to rotate forever can be said to be κατὰ ταῦτα καὶ ὡσαύτως ἔχειν αἰεὶ καὶ ταὐτὸν εἶναι, “remaining permanently in the same state and condition, and being permanently the same.” This formula largely reproduces Plato’s favorite ways of describing the Forms, e.g. *Phaedo* 78c6, where they are said to be “αἰεὶ κατὰ ταῦτα καὶ ὡσαύτως ἔχει”.<sup>90</sup> So Plato has changed the criteria something must meet in order to “always remain the same and in the same state.” In the *Phaedo*, while souls were able to do this, presumably they had to rid themselves of all forms of change to achieve it. Now the *Statesman* myth suggests that a soul rotating forever qualifies fully as “remaining permanently in the same state and condition, and being permanently the same.” Yet such a soul is also in continuous κίνησις. This shift in standards suggests that in the *Statesman*, the Forms are not the only measure against which other entities are compared to determine their perfection; here the highest god enjoys a different kind of perfection which other souls can imitate more directly.

### 3.5 Conclusion

The *Phaedrus*, *Laws*, *Timaeus*, and *Statesman* all contain the view that the motions of souls are spatial, and that souls cause their own motions. The Self-Mover Theory makes these *specific* claims, rather than the generic claims that souls change, or cause their own changes. In addition, the Self-Mover Theory and the Kinetic Theory fit easily together to produce the Unified Theory, claiming that souls are the sources of all spatial motions whatsoever, and because all changes are spatial

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<sup>90</sup>Kahn writes: “This is precisely the formula for invariance used to describe the Forms in the middle dialogues.” (Kahn 1992, p. 56)

motions, souls also become the sources of all changes whatsoever.

## Chapter 4

### The Unified Theory

The results of Chapters 2 and 3 can also contribute to certain related debates about the psychology in Plato's dialogues. In this chapter I will apply the perspective of the earlier chapters to one of these debates, the reading of the argument about immortality at *Phaedrus* 245c–246a. Chapter 3 has already argued that this passage uses κίνησις and related words to mean “spatial motion”; here I will argue that the word ψυχή, “soul,” refers not to individual souls but to a collective sort of material, out of which individual souls are constructed. The *Phaedrus* and the *Timaeus* share a number of claims and assumptions about souls, their properties, and their “construction,” and this common perspective suggests that the Unified Theory is more than a theoretical construct. There is a basis in Plato's texts for conjoining the claims making up the Unified Theory.

The *Phaedrus* seems to assert that souls are uncreated, but the *Timaeus* describes the creation of the World Soul in great detail, and then refers to the subsequent creation of many other souls.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter I show that what this passage

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<sup>1</sup>Although there has been a recent movement among scholars, questioning the practice of comparing theories from different dialogues (see, for example, Gill (2002, p. 155)), discussion of this

shows to be immortal is the “material” from which individual souls are made, not souls *qua* individuals, both because of the earlier result from Chapter 3 and for further reasons I introduce here.<sup>2</sup> This result both reverses the judgment that these dialogues entail different perspectives, and may provide a new starting-point for further attempts to understand the psychology of these works.<sup>3</sup>

## 4.1 The Text

As in Chapter 3, I will be focusing on *Phaedrus* 245c5–246a2. This passage occurs at roughly the midpoint of the *Phaedrus*, just after Socrates begins a long speech in which he argues that love is a form of divine madness and a gift from the gods to mortals. A short distance into this speech, he announces that, “first, we must comprehend the truth about the nature of soul, both divine and human...” (245c2–4). In the very condensed proof that follows, Socrates is usually thought to argue that

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sort is alive and well, both on the particular question I address in this chapter, and on related psychological questions involving the dialogues I discuss. Miller, for example, calls the conflict between the *Phaedrus* and the *Timaeus* on the createdness of individual souls “especially problematic.” (2006, p. 291) Vlastos wrote, “The creation of soul in the *Timaeus* is in flat contradiction with the doctrine of the *Phaedrus* (though not of the *Laws*) that the soul is uncreated...” (Vlastos 1964, p. 414) McPherran compares the *Republic* and *Phaedrus* on a set of ideas about souls and gods (2006, pp. 93–95). Lorenz finds the *Phaedrus* and *Timaeus* taking contrary approaches to the question whether souls are tripartite (2008, p. 254). Gerson pursues comparative questions of psychology throughout much of Gerson (2003); see especially Chapter 6, on the *Timaeus*, *Philebus*, and *Laws*.

<sup>2</sup>I use “material” for lack of a better term, to indicate that there is *something* out of which individual souls are constructed, but without intending to claim that this stuff is any sort of matter or visible stuff. Whether it is any kind of matter or something completely different is a question for another project.

<sup>3</sup>For another way of reconciling the *Phaedrus* and *Timaeus*, see Hackforth (1936, p. 442). As should be clear from the preceding chapters, it is no part of my project to show that Plato’s dialogues are consistent on every point, or even on many points. But the issue discussed in this chapter is a common observation, so much taken for granted that its assertion is usually free of evidence or argument. So it is worth pointing out that this received opinion is not substantiated by the texts.



individual souls are neither created nor destroyed. In Chapter 3 I argued that in this passage, κίνησις should be read as “spatial motion” rather than “generic change”; I will now argue that the word ψυχή should be read collectively rather than individually, that is, that the word refers not to individual souls but to the kind of “material” or “stuff” out of which individual souls are constituted.

Here we can focus on less than the full text of the argument; the relevant section of the argument is concerned with a first principle. This part reads:<sup>4</sup>

So only that which moves itself, because it does not abandon itself, never stops moving. But it is also source and first principle of movement for the other things which move. Now the first principle is something which does not come into being...for if the first principle is destroyed, neither will it ever come into being from anything itself nor will anything else come into being from it, given that all things must come into being from a first principle...It is not possible for this either to be destroyed or to come into being, or else the whole universe and the whole of that which comes to be might collapse together and come to a halt, and never again have a source from which things will be moved and come to be. (Rowe’s translation, slightly modified.)

μόνον δὴ τὸ αὐτὸ κινεῖν, ἅτε οὐκ ἀπολεῖπον ἑαυτό, οὐποτε λήγει κινούμενον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὅσα κινεῖται τοῦτο πηγὴ καὶ ἀρχὴ κινήσεως. ἀρχὴ δὲ ἀγέννητον...ἀρχῆς γὰρ δὴ ἀπολομένης οὔτε αὐτὴ ποτε ἐκ τοῦ οὔτε ἄλλο ἐξ ἐκείνης γενήσεται, εἴπερ ἐξ ἀρχῆς δεῖ τὰ πάντα γίνεσθαι...τοῦτο δὲ οὔτ’ ἀπόλλυσθαι οὔτε γίνεσθαι δυνατόν, ἢ πάντα τε οὐρανὸν πᾶσαν τε γῆν εἰς ἓν συμπεσοῦσαν στήναι καὶ μήποτε αὐθις ἔχειν ὅθεν κινήθέντα γενήσεται. (245c7–d1, d4–6, d7–e2)

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<sup>4</sup>For the complete text of the proof, see page 159.

## 4.2 Interpretations of ψυχή at *Phaedrus* 245c5–246a2

The word ψυχή (“soul”) appears five times in the proof passage, always without an article, and can thus be translated literally either as “soul” or “a soul.”<sup>5</sup> *Prima facie*, three interpretations are possible.

1. ψυχή refers to soul as a collective or mass term, similar to “snow” or “water,” indicating an undifferentiated material or stuff that individual instances are composed of.
2. ψυχή refers to individual souls (I shall call this the naïve individual reading).
3. ψυχή refers to the *species* “soul,” implying that whatever is asserted of the species is also true of each individual member of the species (I shall call this the sophisticated individual reading).

I will argue for the first interpretation.

Scholars have differed on this question, with a recent trend toward the collective reading, which I shall also favor.<sup>6</sup> Ferrari states the collective interpretation

<sup>5</sup>The omission of articles is a general feature of this passage, and imitates archaic style. In this style, the use of a noun without an article can sometimes function as the equivalent of a proper name, as when βασιλεύς without an article refers to the Persian king. Unfortunately, this feature does not help in the interpretation of ψυχή in this passage. For it is not plausible that ψυχή refers to some *particular* soul only, and after eliminating this possibility, we are left with the question whether it refers to souls as individual entities, or to ‘soul’ as a kind of material. Cf. *Gorgias* 451c9, where ἡλίου and σελήνης are used to mean “the sun” and “the moon,” respectively; “soul,” however, is not a single item but a class. So I am asking what the passage would look like if rewritten more literally. To answer this question, we have to consider the content of the claims in the passage. Notice, further, that the passage cannot use ψυχή in *both* senses, since this would amount to equivocation. Claims about one sense of ψυχή will not necessarily be true of the other sense (see further argument in main text for examples). In addition, the reasonable impression that the myth following this passage is about individual souls has no bearing here, since I am focusing only on how to read ψυχή within *Phaedrus* 245c–246a. Finally, this feature matches a pattern noticed in Chapter 1 for the *Phaedo*’s claims about Forms: in both dialogues we find a set of claims, arguments, and distinctions developed to reach a fairly specific goal, but the exact range of things the argument is supposed to apply to is never specified except vaguely.

<sup>6</sup>Endorsers of the individual reading include Nicholson (1999, p. 156), Barnes (1979, p. 115), Patterson (1965, p. 114), Frutiger (1930, p. 134). The proof opens with the sentence Ψυχή πᾶσα

most clearly: “Socrates’ argument treats the soul as cosmic ‘soul-stuff’: the general principle and source of change for the universe (245d1–e2).”<sup>7</sup>

The argument for the collective reading can be stated simply: although a casual reading of the passage gives the impression that the proof is about individual souls, any careful reading assuming this encounters problems explaining the logic of the proof. We thus have to choose between explaining the passage as invalid in a basic and obvious way — for its supporting argument about a first principle obviously fails on any individual reading — and explaining it as a valid argument for a perhaps surprising conclusion. I am unaware of any contextual or dramatic reason that should lead us to expect this argument to be invalid, much less to contain obvious introductory-level errors. The choice, then, seems easy: both the principle of charity and the context favor reading the argument as valid, even if this means revising the conclusion identified by the casual reading.<sup>8</sup> Since the col-

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ἀθάνατος (“all soul is immortal”); this phrase has been scrutinized for a clue to the referent of ψυχή throughout the passage, but unsuccessfully. Frutiger gives a thorough but inconclusive examination of the grammar of the phrase (Frutiger 1930, pp. 130–134), taking the view that the passage is about each soul, but his argument is unconvincing, and he himself admits doubts. Skemp takes the same evidence to point in the opposite direction (1942, p. 3 n. 1). In view of the failure of Frutiger’s approach, Hackforth concludes, “the distinction between collective and distributive senses is not here before his mind.” (Hackforth 1952, p. 64) Guthrie, and possibly De Vries, agree: De Vries (1969, p. 121), Guthrie (1962, Volume IV p. 419 n. 4). Taking the collective side, Robinson suggests the translation “soul in all its forms.” Robinson is following Skemp and Schleiermacher: Robinson (1995a, p. 111), Skemp (1942, p. 3), Schleiermacher (1855, p. 255). Others endorsing the collective reading are Blyth (1997, p. 186), Bett (1986, pp. 12–13), Griswold (1986, p. 84), Thompson (1868, p. 44).

<sup>7</sup>Ferrari (1987, p. 124)

<sup>8</sup>Here is a brief argument for the choice I favor, treating this passage as a valid argument for a surprising conclusion. Context gives us the following reasons to expect a strong argument. First, the argument is spoken by Socrates, who is characterized in the *Phaedrus* as the wiser and more sophisticated partner in the conversation. This is not to say that he is presented as infallible, but only that he is miles ahead of Phaedrus in his grasp of philosophy and argumentation: even if we do not accept the claim that Socrates should give a *strong* argument, we should certainly avoid readings that give him an *obviously weak* one. Second, Socrates himself approves of this speech as he arrives at its end (257a–b), and Phaedrus concurs that it is a much better speech than his first (257c). By comparison, Socrates shows little enthusiasm for the first speech he delivered, both

lective reading is counterintuitive, its justification depends on the fact that both versions of the individual reading produce a contradiction. So let us turn to the problem with the second, naïve individual reading.

## The Individual Readings

The naïve individual reading will re-state the claims from the passage quoted above as follows:

1. Each individual soul moves itself, and therefore...
2. ...each individual soul never stops moving.
3. But each individual soul is also a source and first principle of movement for the other things which move.
4. Now an individual soul, being a first principle, is something which does not come into being.

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as he prepares to speak (237a) and even while still engaged in giving it (241d–e); after finishing this speech he repudiates it entirely (242d). But he never expresses this sort of suspicion toward his second speech. Finally, Socrates introduces the passage I am examining (245c5–246a2) by saying, “...we must comprehend the truth (τᾶληθές, 245c4) about the nature of soul, both divine and human...and the beginning of our proof (ἀποδείξεως, 245c4) is this” (245c2–4). Socrates, then, announces this passage as a statement of the *truth* about soul. To defeat the expectation that the proof will be strong, and valid if possible, we would need a compelling reason. These are *prima facie* reasons for taking the content of Socrates’ second speech seriously, and for the expectation that a passage presented as an argument will admit of a valid, non-amateurish reading. One may also ask: if I am interested in psychological claims, why not focus also on the myth following this argument, which narrates extensively about the travels and travails of souls in the heavens? While these claims are also fascinating, they are presented as a *likeness* of the truth, not as the truth itself. In assessing them, we thus face the problem of deciding what literal claims, if any, we can draw from this material. Since the argument at 245c5–246a2 is presented as the truth, not a likeness, we do not have this problem when discussing the proof. Further, since this passage is described as an argument or proof, we have a basis for drawing logical inferences from the claims made, and expecting that, in addition to the claims found explicitly in the text, the inferential conclusions should also hold.

5. For if an individual soul is destroyed, neither will it ever come into being from anything itself nor will anything else come into being from it, given that...
6. ...all things must come into being from an individual soul.
7. It is not possible for an individual soul either to be destroyed or to come into being, or else the whole universe and the whole of that which comes to be might collapse together and come to a halt, and never again have a source from which things will be moved and come to be.

This set of claims creates a problem, however, for while claims 5 and 6 are supposed to justify claim 7, they fail to do so. If every individual soul is a source of movement, then if a single individual soul were to perish, many other sources of movement would remain, so that the consequence envisioned in 7 does not follow. Far from “never again hav[ing] a source from which things will be moved and come to be,” there would be as many such sources as there were other individual souls that had not perished.<sup>9</sup> The argument therefore provides no reason that any — or indeed, many — individual souls could not perish. The naïve individual reading produces an obvious *non sequitur*.

Further, the results of Chapter 2 render it clearer why this reading fails. First, the Kinetic Theory provides a rationale for the otherwise surprising connection at the end of this argument between “movement” and “coming-to-be,” when Socrates says, “the whole universe...might...come to a halt, and never again have a source from which things will *be moved* and *come to be*.” On the Kinetic Theory, depriving the universe of its (unique) source of spatial motion would also deprive it of its

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<sup>9</sup>Miller and Bett concur that the argument requires that there be no more than one first principle of motion. Miller points out the viability of the mass reading as a solution to this puzzle, while Bett is led by this problem to adopt the mass-term reading: Miller (2006, p. 290), Bett (1986, pp. 10–11).

source of coming-to-be. Conversely, every individual soul is a source of motion, and so also a source of coming-to-be. So reading the *Phaedrus*' immortality argument in conjunction with the Kinetic Theory both helps explain an otherwise anomalous choice of words in the *Phaedrus* passage, and may help explain why Socrates chooses to include his argument about the first principle of motion. Yet with or without the Kinetic Theory, the naïve individual reading fails to produce a valid argument for individual immortality.

Other readings of ψυχή are possible, but will reduce to one of the alternatives already set out. For example, one could read ψυχή as just referring to *all* individual souls directly, rather than referring to individual souls indirectly, and directly to the species. This is a distinct reading from the naïve individual reading, since that approach took ψυχή to refer to *each* individual soul. But this reading is not distinct from the sophisticated individual reading, in spite of appearing different from it at first. For this reading will either parse the argument's claims at the level of individual souls, as the naïve individual reading did, and suffer from the problems just seen for it, or it will parse the argument as applying to *all* souls at once, and suffer from the problems about to be described for the sophisticated individual reading.

The third reading will parse the same passage somewhat differently, taking the claims as follows:

1. The species 'soul,' and therefore each individual soul, move themselves, and (therefore)...
2. The species 'soul,' and therefore each individual soul, never stop moving.

3. But the species 'soul,' and therefore each individual soul, are also the source and first principle of movement for the other things which move.
4. Now the species 'soul' (and therefore each individual soul) being the first principle, does not come into being.
5. For if the species 'soul' (and therefore each individual soul) is destroyed, neither will the species (and therefore any individual soul) ever come into being from anything itself nor will anything else come into being from it, given that...
6. All things must come into being from the species 'soul,' and therefore from some individual soul.
7. It is not possible for the species soul, and therefore for each individual soul, either to be destroyed or to come into being, or else the whole universe and the whole of that which comes to be might collapse together and come to a halt, and never again have a source from which things will be moved and come to be.

Given claims 1 through 5, claim 6 presents a problem. I have parsed it as the claim that "all things must come into being from...some individual soul...", since the alternative is "all things must come into being from...*all* individual souls", which is plainly absurd. But "some" creates an invalid inference: if all things that come into being must do so from the species soul, what follows is that the *species* cannot perish, i.e. not *all* individual souls can perish. But the argument goes on, according to most readings, to claim that *no* individual soul can perish. This way of reading "soul" will not give Socrates a valid chain of reasoning, implying that this is not the claim he is advocating for.

While more sophisticated than the naïve individual reading, this one fares no better logically.

## The Collective Reading

The first, collective reading of ψυχή solves these problems, yielding this set of claims:

1. Soul-stuff moves itself, and therefore...
2. Soul-stuff never stops moving.
3. But soul-stuff is also the source and first principle of movement for the other things which move.
4. Now soul-stuff, being the first principle, is something which does not come into being.
5. For if soul-stuff is destroyed, neither will it ever come into being from anything itself nor will anything else come into being from it, given that...
6. All things must come into being from soul-stuff.
7. It is not possible for soul-stuff either to be destroyed or to come into being, or else the whole universe and the whole of that which comes to be might collapse together and come to a halt, and never again have a source from which things will be moved and come to be.

Since this reading of ψυχή is the only one to produce a valid argument, the text assumes the existence of “soul-stuff,” that is, the “material” from which individual souls are constructed.<sup>10</sup> Individual souls are made of soul-stuff, just as snowballs are made of snow. If all snow melts, it follows that there are no more snowballs, and if all the soul-stuff perishes, it follows that there are no more souls. So on the collective reading only, the argument is valid: if soul-stuff is the source

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<sup>10</sup>This conclusion is not strictly forced by the text. What the text demands is that we find some reading on which ψυχή can be treated collectively, and on which Socrates’ argument is valid (or at least does not suffer from obvious, elementary mistakes). Perhaps there is some other reading satisfying these conditions, but not recognizing “soul-stuff.” But I see no other plausible approach than to treat ψυχή as “soul-stuff.”



of movement, and if all the soul-stuff is destroyed, it follows that no source of movement will be left.<sup>11</sup> The collective sense yields a valid and clear argument where the other two readings give invalid ones. *None* of the three readings yields a valid argument for *individual* immortality.<sup>12</sup> The collective reading is valid because it removes the claim that individual souls cannot perish, reading in its place the claim that the whole mass of soul-stuff cannot perish. The three readings thus parse the structure of the argument in the same way, but only the first, reading ψυχή collectively, produces a valid argument.<sup>13</sup>

### Textual Evidence for the Collective Reading

I next show that textual evidence also favors the collective reading of ψυχή. Begin with the observation that ἀρχή (“first principle”) occurs exclusively in the singular in the passage: if each soul individually were supposed to be an ἀρχή, it would be

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<sup>11</sup>One might object that the text does not specify that all the soul-stuff is destroyed — it says only that the ἀρχή is destroyed. So why do I parse this claim, in the first case, as “an individual soul is destroyed,” but in the second as “all the soul-stuff is destroyed”? On the assumption that ψυχή refers to individual souls, then the sentence τοῦτο πηγὴ καὶ ἀρχὴ κινήσεως, “this is source and first principle” must mean, “an individual soul is source and first principle.” So the subsequent claims about an ἀρχή are also about individual souls, and ἀρχῆς γὰρ δὴ ἀπολομένης, “for if a first principle is destroyed,” can be recast as “for if an individual soul is destroyed.” But on the assumption that ψυχή refers to soul-stuff, the sentence τοῦτο πηγὴ καὶ ἀρχὴ κινήσεως, “this is source and first principle” must mean, “soul-stuff is source and first principle.” Since any claim about soul-stuff as *a kind* applies to the whole of that kind, the subsequent claims about the ἀρχή is about the material or kind that soul-stuff is. So when we reach ἀρχῆς γὰρ δὴ ἀπολομένης, “for if a first principle is destroyed,” we should read this as, “for if soul-stuff is destroyed.” The natural meaning of this is “if *all* soul-stuff is destroyed,” not merely *some*.

<sup>12</sup>Griswold also concludes that personal immortality is not the goal of Socrates’ proof: Griswold (1986, pp. 84–85).

<sup>13</sup>“Soul-stuff” is nowhere explicitly described or discussed in the *Phaedrus*. This is true, but inconclusive: showing that something is mentioned explicitly is perhaps the easiest way to show that that thing is implicated in a text, but certainly not necessary, and sometimes not even sufficient: commentators sometimes dismiss explicit mentions on the ground of irony, for example. “Soul-stuff” is logically implicated by the argument’s structure.

natural for the argument to refer to them as ἀρχαί. This suggests that an individual soul does not qualify as an ἀρχή on its own, and since any number of individual souls less than the complete set of them would be arbitrary, it is natural to think that all the souls together, or better, all the soul-stuff together, constitutes the ἀρχή of movement, with the singular in the text indicating that it is the stuff out of which souls are formed that is the subject of the claims.

One can make a similar point about the word ψυχή: throughout the passage, the word ψυχή appears just five times, always without an article.<sup>14</sup> This is not the pattern we would expect if the passage were about individual souls directly.<sup>15</sup> This is hardly conclusive: the *Phaedrus* passage is elevated and archaic in tone, perhaps omitting articles for the sake of style alone. But it is consistent with the collective reading.

Continuing with linguistic data, we can note that in the whole proof only two phrases briefly focus on individuals, as opposed to abstractions and categories. This is the first:

So only that which moves itself...never stops moving. But it is also source and first principle of movement for the other things which move. μόνον δὴ τὸ αὐτὸ κινεῖν...οὔποτε λήγει κινούμενον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὅσα κινεῖται τοῦτο πηγὴ καὶ ἀρχὴ κινήσεως. (245c8–9)

Here ὅσα focuses the attention on the plurality, and therefore the individuality, of the objects that receive their motions from τὸ αὐτὸ κινεῖν, “that which moves

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<sup>14</sup>The whole passage is in this style: throughout the argument, most substantives occur without articles.

<sup>15</sup>Cf. *Phaedo* 91c7–92a1, a passage in which Socrates is clearly discussing individual souls. There the word ψυχή occurs five times also, three times with the article (91c9, d5, 91e7–92a1), and twice without (91d3, d6).

itself.” It would at least have been natural to shift to the plural as well for “that which moves itself,” if the author had wanted to refer to a number of individual self-movers. The singular τὸ αὐτὸ κινουῦν is an abstract, general category, and its abstraction is thrown into relief by its proximity to the plural ὅσα.<sup>16</sup> Like the previous observations, this is not conclusive. One might account for the pattern of singular and plural, for example, by supposing that each ἀρχή, of an implied plurality of ἀρχαί, moves a number of other entities. But for this reading to become convincing, we should be able to locate some other feature in the passage referring to, or hinting at, a plurality of ἀρχαί, evidence lacking in the passage.

The language throughout the rest of the passage, and in particular all the language used to discuss the soul, is strongly general. For example, the proof begins by dividing entities into two groups, each viewed as a single class: τὸ δ’ ἄλλο κινουῦν καὶ ὑπ’ ἄλλου κινούμενον (“that which moves something else and is moved by something else”) is opposed to τὸ αὐτὸ κινουῦν (“that which moves itself,” 245c5–7). In each of these phrases, the neuter article focuses on the characteristic by which the group is defined, thus amounting to something like a definition of a set or class. The central section of the proof is about an ἀρχή, “first principle,” and this word is also deprived of an article throughout. Through the entire proof, in fact, there is only one instance of an article other than the indefinite neuter τὸ (in τὸ αὐτὸ κινουῦν), found in the phrase τὰ πάντα, “everything” (245d6). In short, there is no significant use of individualized language anywhere in the passage, a feature

<sup>16</sup>The other individualized phrase is, ...ψυχῆς οὐσίαν τε καὶ λόγον τοῦτον αὐτὸν τις λέγων οὐκ αἰσχυνεῖται, “someone who asserts that this is the essence and definition of soul will not be ashamed” (245e3–4). Here τις focuses on an arbitrary individual person, but the individual perspective does not include the content of this person’s assertion. This phrase, therefore, has no bearing on how to read ψυχή.

best explained by the collective reading of ψυχή.<sup>17</sup>

Further, we can trace Socrates' shift in focus from soul-stuff to individual souls through his word choice: he begins his proof with the phrase ψυχή πᾶσα, "all soul" (245c5), whose ambiguity we have discussed above. The same phrase is used at 246b6, as Socrates introduces the myth he is about to tell. But once the myth has begun, he soon begins using the definite article with ψυχή, writing ...αἱ δε ἄλλαι ψυχαί, ἡ μὲν ἄριστα θεῷ ἐπομένη... ("...of the other souls, the one that follows god best...," 248a1–2). The articles signal the myth's focus on individual souls.

Finally, although the context of the *Phaedrus* proof may easily lead us to think that Socrates' claims apply to individual souls, in fact he never promises to prove the immortality (or indestructibility) of individual souls, nor does he claim to have done so afterward. By contrast, in both the *Phaedo* and the *Republic* Socrates expressly claims to prove the immortality of the *individual* soul. At *Phaedo* 106e8–107a1, for example, Socrates says, "The soul is immortal and indestructible, and in reality *our souls* will be in Hades" (ψυχή ἀθάνατον καὶ ἀνώλεθρον, καὶ τῷ ὄντι ἔσονται ἡμῶν αἱ ψυχαὶ ἐν ᾿Αΐδου). And at *Republic* 608d2–3) Socrates says, "Have you not realized, I said, that *our souls* are immortal and will never be destroyed?" (Οὐκ ἤσθησαι, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ὅτι ἀθάνατος ἡμῶν ἡ ψυχή καὶ οὐδέποτε ἀπόλλυται;). In both other contexts, Plato has Socrates indicate beyond any doubt that individual souls are supposed to be shown immortal by the proofs given: the absence of this claim in the *Phaedrus* may thus be telling.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup>One might object that this feature can also be explained by appealing to the archaic style of the whole passage. This objection, however, fails to address the logical points raised above on page 224. Reading ἀρχή in the "sophisticated individualistic" way described above (page 220) will produce the same problems as those found for that way of reading ψυχή.

<sup>18</sup>Note also that the myth's description of individual souls migrating from one body to others gives no support to the claim that individual souls are immortal *qua* individuals in the *Phaedrus*,

## Context

In this section I argue that there are plausible explanations available for what may be the surprising conclusion of the proof at 245c–246a. Since the unexpectedness of the conclusion is, so far as I can see, the major objection to its acceptance, it may help to show that there are resources in the text for explaining its presence, ideas that render it less anomalous than it might at first appear.<sup>19</sup> I take some of Ferrari's basic observations about *Phaedrus* as assumptions, and show that they can be developed to suggest reasons for which Socrates would offer *Phaedrus* the proof he does, rather than the proof *Phaedrus* (and most readers) expect.<sup>20</sup>

Ferrari's work on the *Phaedrus* suggests that *Phaedrus* is an acme of un-self-conscious contradiction. Ferrari portrays *Phaedrus*, for example, as an addict of conversations, something also true of Socrates, but in a very different way.<sup>21</sup> Whereas Socrates puts himself into conversation for the improvement of his own soul, *Phaedrus* seeks to arrange conversations among others for his own entertainment.<sup>22</sup> Ferrari takes the ambiguity between the collective and individual

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since Socrates never claims that these souls will go on existing *qua* individuals forever. As Cebes worries at *Phaedo* 87b–88b, individual immortality would only follow from a claim or an argument that these individual souls go on existing forever, not merely that they go on existing for a long time. Since Plato shows in the *Phaedo* that he is keenly aware of the difference between a proof that souls will last a long time, and a proof that souls are immortal, we should be especially cautious in attributing an argument for immortality to one of his texts, when that argument's logic only succeeds in showing that souls last a long time.

<sup>19</sup>Blyth offers a distinct but similar reading, claiming that the passage contains both a valid proof of immortality and a series of deliberately misleading statements meant to provoke the reader into searching for the correct version (1997, pp. 201–202). While rich and subtle, his approach strikes me as overconfident; I make no claim about what effect the reading I advocate is supposed to have on the reader, for example.

<sup>20</sup>I take Ferrari's reading as a starting-point, but he is of course not responsible for the way I develop it. For his account, see Ferrari (1987).

<sup>21</sup>Ferrari (1987, pp. 6–7)

<sup>22</sup>"*Phaedrus* loves to arrange talk. Even when he talks himself, it is as much for the excitement of provoking further talk as for the value of what he has to say...*Phaedrus*...has a tendency

meanings of ψυχή as intentional, making the point that the impersonal (i.e. collective) point of view in the proof forces the reader to adopt the personal (i.e. individual or first-person) point of view as well.<sup>23</sup> That is, the characteristic attempt of philosophers to look at the world impersonally also forces them to confront the personal perspective.

Now the proof's context, and surely Phaedrus' expectations as well, lead the reader to expect a proof of *individual* immortality. But what we in fact get is something subtly but significantly different: rather than showing that each individual soul is immortal, and thus gratifying the personal interest each person has in continued survival, this proof shows that the material making up individual souls is indestructible, thus telling us something important about individual souls, but pointedly *not* that they are immortal *qua* individuals. If we start from the reasonable assumption that Phaedrus, like most readers, takes an interest in the proof partly because of the expectation that it will show his own soul immortal, we can ask what effect it would have on him should he realize that the proof in fact looks past the individual level to a more fundamental and universal aspect of souls, their underlying material. Now in fact Phaedrus shows no sign in the dialogue that he has noticed the real structure of the proof, so if this is part of Socrates' intention, it may be an attempt that misses its aim. But this is beside the point: it is neverthe-

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to consider intellectual talk good just because it is intellectual talk, rather than because it is good talk...he devotes himself to promoting the discourse of the mind as an end in itself, rather than evaluating it...But Phaedrus is not after pleasure at all costs..." (Ferrari 1987, pp. 7-8) I read Ferrari as attributing the pleasure-motive to Phaedrus as the principle attraction of intellectual talk. Of course, Phaedrus' derivation of pleasure from arranging intellectual talk is far from simple-minded, and is in fact quite sophisticated. But I take the final sentence quoted as indicating that pleasure is Phaedrus' principle reason for loving talk in the way he does; at any rate, my further use of this portrait does not depend on this detail of my reading.

<sup>23</sup>Ferrari's use of "impersonal" and "personal" lends an air of paradox where I see none; I prefer "collective" and "individual."

less plausible that the proof is intended to draw Phaedrus away from his habitual focus on individuals and their personalities, toward more universal facts, facts applicable to all individuals. The proof's emphasis on a collective, or universal, or impersonal, rather than a personal, perspective may be an attempt to undermine Phaedrus' tendency to see the world through the lens of personalities and their surface interactions.

This suggestion applies Ferrari's view that the proof's impersonal perspective forces us into the personal perspective, in the following way. By adopting an impersonal perspective on the logic of the proof, we have been led to discover that the proof's conclusion is not what it first appears to be. This in turn has prompted us to ask what motive Socrates could have for giving Phaedrus, not the proof he expects, but the one we in fact find in the text. The motive I am suggesting, appeals to features of Phaedrus himself. Socrates' proof may also be designed to lead Phaedrus away from his preoccupation with personality, toward a concern with objective content. Ferrari is at least correct that the personal and impersonal are intertwined in this part of the dialogue: it is Phaedrus' personality, too focused on the individual and merely personal, that leads Socrates to produce a proof focusing on a deeper, more universal aspect of souls. Perhaps also Socrates' interest in arguments and philosophy has left him too little focused on how concrete individual humans relate to one another, and this lack of familiarity is reflected in his being led away from his usual haunts by Phaedrus. Any or all these suggestions may be reflected, and added to, by the proof's somewhat deceptive quality: it allows itself to be taken for something it is not, but mistaking its nature is a sign that one is in need of what the proof actually does, namely, focus on the universal

and eternal aspects of the human soul.

Phaedrus is too much focused on the personal, evaluating talk and speeches not by the quality of their content but by his success at inducing others to give speeches or continue conversations. He puts the personal aspects of human interaction so much to the fore that he loses sight of that for which conversation ought to occur, namely the truth.<sup>24</sup> Socrates therefore gives him a proof that shifts the perspective away from the personal toward the collective or universal.<sup>25</sup> The first parts of the myth continue this universal perspective: the charioteer represents an undetermined number of individual souls, both human and divine (246a–d). That is, the charioteer is not any particular soul, but stands in for the *structure* of all souls, both human and divine. Divine souls have two good horses, while humans have to make do with one good horse and one bad, but the larger structure is identical. The image of the charioteer, therefore, is individual, in that it represents the structure of any given individual soul. It is, however, generic rather than *personal*: it does not represent any particular *person*.<sup>26</sup> So after the proof has muted

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<sup>24</sup>Ferrari remarks on Phaedrus' insistence that Socrates stay and continue the conversation after he delivers his second speech, and later writes, "[Phaedrus] cannot conceive that the values of performance might actually prove a danger to the well-being of intellectual talk; cannot conceive, in other words, that he should aim to be a philosopher first, and an impresario only second." (Ferrari 1987, pp. 5–6 and 9)

<sup>25</sup>Not necessarily the impersonal, as Ferrari has it. And *pace* Nicholson, who writes, "Moreover, such a 'mass-soul' interpretation could not be united with the following imagery whereby each soul is visualized as a distinct entity..." Nicholson (1999, p. 156). But I have already shown that the collective reading of "soul" is compatible with the existence of individual souls, so there is no further problem in uniting it with the imagery of the myth. Nicholson's reading may stem partly from the assumption that Socrates is arguing for the immortality of each individual's soul: Nicholson (1999, p. 157).

<sup>26</sup>By "individual" here I mean focusing on a single entity as opposed to a group (and I count an instance as individual even if the single entity is clearly intended to represent a group, as it is in the myth). By "personal" I mean focusing on characteristics that make one member of a genus different from other members. Thus there can be accounts that are consistently both individual and impersonal, as this one is. Barnes also uses "personal" in this sense: Barnes (1979, pp. 115–116).



the personal and individual perspective to which Phaedrus is too much attached, the myth goes on to replace these with a more universal and objective portrait of souls, focusing on the structure they have in common. Further, the myth says that what souls must do to succeed is just what Phaedrus tends to miss, such as keeping the truth and reality in view (i.e. the Forms, at 247c–e), and identifying and following worthy models (i.e. the gods, at 246e–247a). These are precisely the sorts of things Phaedrus ignores in his exclusive concern with quantity over quality, with stimulating *more* talk rather than *good* talk. Later in the myth, the theme of love comes back into view (249d–257a), but now its purpose is to aid lovers in more effectively remembering the truth. Interactions with other souls have now come back into view, but their proper character is explained as aiding in the task of recalling eternal, objective realities. In this way the proof works along with the myth in an attempt to reorient Phaedrus' view. As I noted above, there is no evidence in the dialogue that Phaedrus ever realizes the real conclusion of the proof Socrates gives. The much longer myth, however, tries to accomplish something similar, replacing or re-contextualizing Phaedrus' orientation toward the personal and toward outer form with a view of what is universal in souls, and toward what is valuable for souls, that is, the Forms, or what we might just characterize as the truth. It is not clear to me how much Socrates has succeeded, by the end of the dialogue, in turning Phaedrus away from his focus on personality, toward a new focus on truth. But it is not unreasonable to take the final exchanges, in which Phaedrus expresses agreement with Socrates' views, and most of all with his final prayer to Pan, as indicating at least the potential for Phaedrus to re-evaluate his habits. The proof at 245c–246a, then, may take the first step

in a much longer attempt by Socrates to turn Phaedrus out of the direction he is going. The proof's conclusion is much less surprising when viewed in the context of this longer project, as a prelude to the following myth, and as introducing the somewhat more philosophical discussion in the second half of the dialogue.

### The Categories of the Argument

So far I have shown that on logical, linguistic, and dramatic grounds, we should prefer to read *Phaedrus* 245c5–246a2 as applying to the stuff out of which individual souls are constituted, and not directly to individual souls. But some of the properties true of the material from which a thing is made are true of the thing itself, so if this passage proves that soul-stuff is uncreated, it may also follow that individual souls are uncreated. To see whether this is the case, we need to examine the other concepts employed in the proof and to examine the structure of their entailments.

In the central parts of the passage (245d1–e3), soul is not mentioned at all; instead, the argument makes claims about “that which moves itself,” “a first principle,” and “a first principle of movement.” This soulless section is jarringly introduced by the sentence ἀρχὴ δὲ ἀγένητον (“But a first principle is ungenerated,” my translation, 245d5), the abruptness of this sentence helping to mark the transition to a somewhat different topic. For the subject of this sentence is no longer soul, but the ἀρχὴ that soul has just been said to be. It would therefore be too quick to assume that the claims of this central section can be transmitted unchanged to the level of individual souls.

As we have already noted, the central section (245d1–e3) is not about soul, but

about an ἀρχή κινήσεως, “a first principle, or beginning, of motion.” The claims here carry implications for souls, of course, but we must travel back across three categories to arrive at individual souls: first, from the ἀρχή κινήσεως to τὸ αὐτὸ κινεῖν, “that which moves itself.” Second, from that which moves itself to soul-stuff. Finally, from soul-stuff to individual souls. The first stage in clarifying the relations among these levels is to see how the items at each level fit into the category above, that is, whether each item is the only member of the next-more-general category, or merely one among several such members. When we have spelled this out, we will be ready to decide whether claims made about an item at one level entail the same claims for a different level.

Starting at the top, or most general level, the ἀρχή κινήσεως is introduced when Socrates says, τὸ αὐτὸ κινεῖν...καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὅσα κινεῖται τοῦτο πηγή καὶ ἀρχή κινήσεως (“that which moves itself is also source and first principle of motion for the other things which move,” 245c7–9). This statement places that which moves itself in the category of first principle of movement. Note, however, that it does not tell us anything about the opposite entailment; that is, we do not know whether self-movers are the *only* first principle of movement, or whether there are other first principles of movement in addition to the self-movers.<sup>27</sup> A bit later, Socrates repeats the claim, saying οὕτω δὴ κινήσεως μὲν ἀρχὴ τὸ αὐτὸ αὐτὸ κινεῖν, “It is in this way, then, that that which moves itself is a first principle of movement” (245d6–7). These statements, then, leave room for things other than self-movers to belong to the category of first principle of motion. We have seen above, however, that the argument will not tolerate more than a single member

<sup>27</sup>Nicholson makes roughly the same point: Nicholson (1999, pp. 160, 161). Thompson, however, claims that Socrates has shown that only soul is an ἀρχή: Thompson (1868, p. 45).

of the category “first principle,” so we can strengthen our conclusion to the claim that something is a self-mover if and only if it is a first principle of movement.

The next step down is to relate soul-stuff to the category of self-movers. The proof opens with the assertion that “soul” belongs to the class of τὸ αὐτὸ κινεῖν, which should be read as the claim that soul-stuff is in the category of that which moves itself.<sup>28</sup> At least initially, there is no claim that soul is the *only* member of the class of τὸ αὐτὸ κινεῖν, but at the end of the proof Socrates says, ...μὴ ἄλλο τι εἶναι τὸ αὐτὸ ἑαυτὸ κινεῖν ἢ ψυχὴν..., “...that which moves itself is nothing other than soul” (245e7–246a1). Rowe concludes, rightly, that soul is therefore the *only* thing that moves itself, since soul is here *defined* as that which moves itself.<sup>29</sup> Since a definition is equivalent to a biconditional, anything that satisfies the *definiens* must satisfy the *definiendum*, and vice versa. So everything that moves itself is soul-stuff, and every bit of soul-stuff moves itself.

Finally, we return to the relation between soul-stuff and individual souls. Here we must be more speculative, since we have found that this passage makes no claims about individual souls; that is, the passage only arrives at the level of soul-stuff, so we have to make reasonable inferences about the relations between soul-stuff and individual souls. Just as all snowballs are made of snow, all souls are made from soul-stuff. But in the other direction, not all soul-stuff must be found in individual souls, just as not all snow is found in some snowball or other. Plato could have added the claim that all soul-stuff is portioned out among individual souls.<sup>30</sup> But he does not say this, either here in the *Phaedrus* or elsewhere. So the

<sup>28</sup>I pass over the reference to soul as τὸ ἀεικίνητον (245c5), since this is immediately replaced by τὸ αὐτὸ κινεῖν.

<sup>29</sup>Rowe (1986, p. 177 ad 245e7–246a1)

<sup>30</sup>Equivalently, Plato could have added the claim that any lump of soul-stuff automatically con-

text licenses only the claim that any individual soul is composed of soul-stuff, not the stronger claim that all soul-stuff is found within individual souls.

To summarize: every individual soul is made from soul-stuff, and all soul-stuff moves itself. What moves itself, equivalent to the whole mass of soul-stuff together, is also the first principle of motion. Anything predicated of the first principle of motion must also be true of what moves itself and this must in turn be true of soul-stuff. But what is true of these categories need not be true of individual souls. At the end of the proof passage Socrates concludes, ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἀγέννητόν τε καὶ ἀθάνατον ψυχὴ ἂν εἴη, “necessarily, soul is uncreated and deathless.” This is not the claim that individual souls are immortal *qua* individual souls, but the claim that they are immortal only *qua* stuff or material out of which individual souls are constituted.<sup>31</sup>

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stitutes an individual soul. But there is no evidence for this view in the text, and, if we admit the *Timaeus* as relevant here, there is some evidence against it, when Timaeus describes the Demiurge constructing the World-Soul out of some soul-stuff he has previously prepared. If any lump of soul-stuff automatically made an individual soul, the Demiurge’s work in making the World-Soul would have been considerably easier. The *Timaeus* describes soul-stuff not found in souls on two occasions: first when the Demiurge has mixed the initial batch of soul-stuff, but has not yet molded it into the form that will be the World Soul (35b1–4), and again when the Demiurge takes “what remained of the previous ingredients” and divides them into a number of souls (41d4–8).

<sup>31</sup>Bett endorses the collective reading, but thinks that anything true of soul-material must also be true of individual souls. But his analogies, water and electricity, are both non-count nouns. He says, rightly, that anything true of water as such will be true of any pool of water, and similarly for electric current. But ‘soul’ is a count noun, and souls are treated as individuals at many points in Plato’s texts. What individuates them, in Plato’s view, is unclear, but the most plausible view is that something more is required for a pool of soul-stuff to count as an individual soul. After all, if Plato’s view were that individual souls are nothing but pools of soul-stuff, it would follow immediately that individual souls are not immortal, since nothing would prevent one pool from merging with another, or splitting into more than one. So individual souls must have at least one essential difference from soul-material, and this difference keeps anything true of soul-material from being automatically or necessarily true of individual souls as well, just as not everything true of snow is automatically or necessarily true of snowballs. We see this difference as well in the myth following the proof, in that individual souls are described as having a structure that could not belong to soul-stuff: it makes sense to say that an individual soul is tripartite, but not to say that soul-stuff is tripartite. For if the stuff or material were tripartite, we would have not one kind of stuff but three. And if soul-stuff happens to be a mixture of three ingredients, this fact does

Analogously, if some mass of clay is uncreated and indestructible, it does not follow that statues molded from the clay are also uncreated and indestructible. Rather, the clay may be formed into a statue at one time, and later pounded back into formless clay. In the same way, the text says only that the stuff souls are formed from is uncreated and indestructible, stopping short of attributing those properties to particular souls.

Alert readers will have noticed, however, that there is another argument for immortality in *Phaedrus* 245c–246a.<sup>32</sup> We have been focused on Socrates' second, longer argument to the effect that "That which is its own source of motion is immortal," in which he develops his claims about the first principle of motion. But before this he also gives a brief argument that supports this conclusion independently, saying, "that which is always in movement is immortal..." and "...only that which moves itself, because it does not abandon itself, never stops moving" (245c5–8). This argument says that anything that moves itself never stops moving, and anything that never stops moving is immortal. But this argument does not validate the immortality of individual souls either, for "soul" is *defined* as "that which moves itself," and the "soul" that has been thus defined is *soul-stuff*, not any individual soul. Since the definition has the force of "if and only if," it positively *excludes* individual souls from being self-movers. This argument, too, fails to provide any evidence that individual souls are immortal.

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not imply that individual souls are tripartite. It is one thing to describe a non-count material as a mixture of three ingredients, but something else to describe a count noun as tripartite, with three identifiable structural components. Bett (1986, pp. 12–13).

<sup>32</sup>This argument is analyzed as an independent support for Step 2 of the overall argument in Chapter 3, page 160.

### 4.3 The *Phaedrus* and the *Timaeus*

In the *Timaeus*, the Demiurge tells the gods he has created that they can be dissolved, but that he will never consent to this (41a–b). This declaration is consistent with reading the *Phaedrus* and the *Timaeus* as parts of the Unified Theory, at least on the narrow issue of whether souls are uncreated and whether individual souls are immortal. For if one of the gods were to be undone, the individual soul would be dissolved, but presumably the soul-stuff out of which it had been composed would remain.

The often-repeated assertion that the *Phaedrus* and the *Timaeus* contradict one another on the question of whether souls are created or uncreated has been shown to be groundless, for it relies on assumptions unsupported by the text of the *Phaedrus*. In fact, neither the *Timaeus* nor the *Phaedrus* promise immortality to individual human souls, in spite of the fact that casual reading of both may leave the impression that this has been asserted. For in the *Timaeus*, only the gods are promised immortality; that promise will not necessarily apply to humans, and almost certainly not to the worst souls. So it is quite likely that some individual souls are mortal and will in fact perish, and this is consistent with what is said in the *Phaedrus*.

The argument here is, to be sure, more speculative than those that have come before, insofar as it takes a criterion from the *Timaeus* and applies it to the *Phaedrus*. For those who find this approach overambitious, here is a weaker conclusion: neither dialogue contains a claim of immortality, either for individual human souls or for any souls worse than those. My argument will reach the slightly stronger conclusion (at the cost of employing a technique not all will accept),

namely that the *Phaedrus* not only leaves open the possibility that some individual souls will perish, but also describes certain cases where this is likely. In the myth following the *Phaedrus* proof, Socrates says that no soul enters a human body unless it has seen at least a glimpse of the Forms, implying that there are some souls that never succeed in seeing the Forms even once during their time in the heavens (249b5–6). These souls, we are told, enter animal bodies. They are not mentioned again, but we do learn about the 10,000 year itinerary of the souls that manage to see the Forms, entering a human body, separating from that body, either suffering punishment beneath the earth or enjoying rewards in the heavens until 1,000 years have elapsed, then choosing another life, and continuing this cycle until 10,000 years have passed, when they finally return to the heavens. Given the restriction on entering human bodies, during all this time the bad souls must inhabit the bodies of animals only. In the same part of the *Phaedrus*, Socrates says that it is the sight of the Forms that gives the gods their divinity and feeds the rational part of human souls (247d–e, 249c). This prompts the question what happens to souls that never achieve this nourishment. Now in the *Timaeus* the Demiurge promises that he will never consent to the dissolution of the gods, for “only one who is evil would consent to the undoing of what has been well fitted together and is in fine condition” (41b1–2). But this promise would not apply to the bad souls from the *Phaedrus*: in fact, no reason is given that the Demiurge would *not* consent to their dissolution, for they are neither well fitted together nor in fine condition. The status of human souls in the *Timaeus* is also questionable. The Demiurge’s promise not to destroy the gods comes just before he gives his leftover soul-stuff to the other gods, for them to use in constructing human and other souls. The



soul-stuff he gives them for this purpose is explicitly called “of a second and third grade of purity” (41d4–7). The implication of the juxtaposition must be that there is also no promise that individual human souls are immortal, since they are less well fitted together, and in less fine condition than the gods to whom the promise is given. Both dialogues, then, stop short of claiming that individual human souls are immortal, and both hint at the perishability of some individual souls.

Finally, let us note another way in which the two dialogues do not contradict one another: neither claims that more soul-stuff, or more individual souls, will not again be created in the future. We saw above that the *Phaedrus* leaves open the possibility that individual souls will perish, and that their material could be re-used to create other individual souls. Likewise, nothing in the *Timaeus* precludes the creation of more soul-stuff, or of more individual souls.<sup>33</sup> Timaeus’ description of the World Soul’s creation begins precisely by describing the mixing of soul-material, from which the World Soul and all others will be manufactured (34b–37c).<sup>34</sup> Timaeus does not say that this is the first time that soul-material has been mixed up, or that this is the only amount of it in existence. It would be consistent with the creation described in the *Timaeus*, then, to suppose that other soul-stuff has been mixed together on other occasions, and other souls created from those other batches, or that this will happen again in the future.

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<sup>33</sup>By comparison, Socrates is made to deny these claims at *Republic* 611a, saying, “...the same [souls] will always exist. I mean, they surely could not become fewer in number if none is destroyed, or more numerous either.”

<sup>34</sup>Bett notices this commonality between the two dialogues as well: Bett (1986, p. 24).

## 4.4 Conclusion

A common and natural understanding of the claims found in the *Phaedrus* and *Timaeus* is mistaken, namely that these dialogues contain conflicting claims about the status of individual souls as created or uncreated, and that each dialogue (but especially the *Phaedrus*) gives individual immortality to souls. In fact, neither dialogue claims that individual souls are uncreated, nor that they are immortal, nor that the same souls always exist. We saw in earlier chapters that the *Phaedo* and *Republic* contain the Imitation Theory of individual souls, while the *Phaedrus*, *Timaeus*, and *Laws* contain the Self-Mover Theory. The results just argued for add some points on which these two sets of dialogues divide in the same way: the *Republic* denying that individual souls can come into being or perish, the Self-Mover Theory failing to claim this, and distinctly hinting that certain individual souls will perish. These parallels between the *Phaedrus* and the *Timaeus* show, in addition, that the Unified Theory is more than a theoretical construct. It is true, but uninteresting, that we could conjoin claims from any pair of Platonic dialogues to produce a new set of claims. In this case, however, we have two strong grounds for combining claims. First, the Kinetic Theory and the Self-Mover Theory fit together elegantly and precisely; the former provides an account reducing all changes to spatial motion, while the latter claims that soul is the source of all changes, and that soul moves itself in space. Second, on a more particular set of claims about souls, the dialogue expounding the Kinetic Theory (*Timaeus*) turns out to match one of the dialogues expounding the Self-Mover Theory (*Phaedrus*) on three claims about individual souls. Neither gives immortality to individual souls, neither claims that human souls are uncreated, and neither claims that the

same souls must always exist. Negative facts are usually not persuasive, but in this case the claims that fail to appear are not chosen at random, but express views from the *Imitation Theory*, or views that are widely believed to lie in these texts. Developmentalists, noting that the *Laws* also refrains from using the article with ψυχή, may conclude that Plato eventually became a skeptic about the immortality of individual souls.

## Conclusion

I have raised at least as many issues as I have solved; here I will indicate what I have shown, and the most salient issues I have not been able to pursue.

Chapter 1 explains some aspects of the Imitation Theory, found in the *Phaedo* and *Republic*. I would expect to find similar (not necessarily identical) views in other dialogues usually classified as “middle”: the *Gorgias* and *Symposium*, for example.

The major claim in Chapter 1 is that the Imitation Theory assumes a Form of Soul without mentioning it. This Form gives individual souls something to imitate that is what they *essentially* are. We are more familiar with thinking of souls imitating the Forms of Justice, Knowledge or Beauty, but these are inessential to souls. The Form of Soul, by contrast, is what a soul most basically is; its existence explains why, on this theory, it is good for souls to separate from the visible world and draw closer to the world of Forms.

The Form of Soul raises several further questions. Why does Plato refrain from mentioning it? What else can we learn about individual souls from the presence of this Form? To the former question, I have two answers, one more pedestrian, the other more speculative. The pedestrian answer is that Plato was dissatisfied with the Imitation Theory at the time he wrote these texts, and so avoided mentioning

what he considered its weakest point, what Archer-Hind called a “metaphysical monstrosity.” The speculative answer is that precisely the absence of this central concept is a strategy to provoke readers, to leave them feeling that something is missing, and to conduct their own search for what it may be. On the issue of what individual souls are like on this theory, I show that they fit consistently into a slot between the Forms and the visible world, with the status of “invisible individuals.” I suspect there is more to discover in this direction.

I have also been unable to give a fuller description of the Imitation Theory, which would include discussion of, for example, the question why souls become more like whichever ‘world’ they imitate. Does this indicate (as I suggested in the Introduction) that the visible world and the world of Forms are each a source of change for souls, whenever souls are imitating those worlds? We may also ask whether the dialogues expounding this theory contain other clues as to what it is in souls that forces them to imitate something (why not nothing?), and by what mechanism (for lack of a better word) souls resemble what they imitate more and more closely.

Chapter 2 described the Kinetic Theory, claiming that all forms of change are nothing but spatial motions. The Kinetic Theory is a parallel to the Form of Soul insofar as neither is mentioned directly in the text. Fortunately, this theory requires much less detective work to uncover, as its pieces are laying on the surface of the dialogue, ready to be assembled. This theory’s main interest is the extension and support it provides to the Self-Mover Theory.

I was unable to pursue in much depth the nature of the “receptacle”; while my argument adds weight to the camp taking it as space, a full treatment would

involve many more issues. I am skeptical that any new argument will push the debate about the receptacle toward consensus, but a new argument is of interest nonetheless.

Chapter 3 argued that in the three texts well-known for containing the Self-Mover Theory, “motion” means “spatial motion.”

I concentrated on establishing this claim, and so did not give a full description of the Self-Mover Theory itself. I also showed that one additional text, a passage from the *Statesman*, assumes the same claims as the other, better-known *loci* of the theory. This passage contains a striking claim, given the better-known assumptions of the Imitation Theory, namely that rotation in a single direction, at constant speed, is a way of remaining in the *same* state.

The first task for further work would be to give a fuller description of the theory, and then to ask what clues we are given about *how* soul moves itself, and what this means (beyond the fact that the motion is spatial). I suspect that certain other dialogues customarily classified as late may also betray assumptions of the Self-Mover Theory, but have not been able to demonstrate that here. There is also more to be said about the innovative claim in the *Statesman* concerning rotation. I am curious whether other Platonic texts can be found assuming this claim. I also hope that further reflection will yield a more coherent view of why rotation becomes the model of rationality.

The Self-Mover Theory and the Kinetic Theory look designed to support the claim that soul is the source of all change. The Self-Mover Theory guarantees that soul is the source of its own changes, the Kinetic Theory showing that soul is the source of all other changes. I hold the view, although I have not argued for it

carefully here, that the Self-Mover and Imitation Theories are incompatible. The best reason for this is that the Imitation Theory has souls imitating Forms, and the Form of Soul especially. On the Imitation Theory, then, there is at least a theoretical possibility that souls may escape from change altogether, becoming completely changeless, as the gods are said to be at *Republic* 380c–381c. On the Self-Mover Theory, however, soul is its own source of change. I see no possibility of soul ever failing to change, and no need for the Form of Soul as an object of imitation. These claims would need substantial argument to make good on, so here I merely record them as impressions I hope to work through more carefully later.

Chapter 4 examines the use of “soul” in the *Phaedrus* proof at 245c–246a, arguing that individual souls are never mentioned in this passage, and that the proof says nothing about them. Instead, it shows that soul-material is self-moving (while nothing else is), is immortal, and is the first principle of motion. Further, the *Phaedrus* and *Timaeus* share a set of claims about souls (or rather the absence of certain claims about souls), showing that the assumptions in each dialogue are closer than usually thought. This is significant partly because the *Phaedrus* gives the most concise statement of the Self-Mover Theory, while the *Timaeus* expounds the Kinetic Theory. Marrying these two theories as the Unified Theory is thus not an arbitrary proposal.

The proof focuses not on individual souls, but on soul-stuff or material. I have not been able to investigate whether other texts containing the Self-Mover Theory share this approach. One would also like a fuller description of the set of claims relating to soul-stuff. Where are the claims found, what else do they say about souls, and what do we learn from the fuller description about the Kinetic Theory?

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